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This book was purchased
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Chaffee, some fifty odd
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"Deacon Chaffee" lived and
I believe died in the old farm
house at the foot of Tarkila
hill.

D. R.

"Charles Chauncy D.D. a minister of Boston, graduated at Harvard College 1721. He was ordained pastor of the first church in Boston as colleague of Mr Foxcroft 1727. He died 1787 in the 83 year of his age."

Blake.

TWELVE

SERMONS

On the following ſeaſonable and important Subjects.

Juſtification impoſſible by the Works of the Law.

The Queſtion anſwered, "wherefore then ſerveth the Law"?

The Nature of Faith, as juſtifying, largely explained, and remarked on.

The Place, and Uſe, of Faith, in the Affair of Juſtification.

Human Endeavours, in the uſe of Means, the way in which Faith is obtained.

The Method of the Spirit in communicating the "Faith, by which the Juſt do live".

TheInquiry of the young Man in the Goſpel, "what ſhall I do that I may have eternal Life"?

With interſperſed Notes, inDefence of the Truth; eſpecially in the Points treated on, in the above Diſcourſes.

By CHARLES CHAUNCY, *D. D.*

And one of the Paſtors of the firſt Church of Chriſt in BOSTON.

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1765.

PREFACE.

THE making any apology for the following publication would be needleſs, the ſubjects of it are ſo highly intereſting and important, ſhould they be ſet in a clear and juſt point of light: If they are not, no excuſe can juſtifie the Author for medling with that he had better let alone. It muſt be left with the reader to judge in this matter. In the mean time, I may ſay, in behalf of my ſelf, that I have endeavoured, not without conſiderable pains, to collect from the ſcripture what it ſays, in different places, concerning the ſeveral truths here treated on; and to place it in one connected view, and in as diſtinct and perſpicuous a manner as I could. I have purpoſely avoided all pomp of words, and all ſhew of learned ſubtlety by the artful uſe of ſcholaſtic, ſyſtematical, and metaphyſical terms; ſtudying to deliver my ſelf ſo as that I might be eaſily underſtood. If I have wrote in a myſtical, perplexed, unintelligible way, I own it is a fault not to be overlooked; and

am willing to ſubmit to deſerved chaſtiſement : And the rather, as it is, with me, a ſettled point, that if a man writes ſo as that it is difficult, if poſſible, to underſtand, and aſcertain, his real meaning, his thoughts are confuſed and unconnected, as they lie in his mind ; or he has been inexcuſably careleſs in ranging and expreſſing them ; or, what is worſe, he has ſome covered deſign to ſerve, by entrenching himſelf in darkneſs and ambiguity.

If any ſhould think it worth while to read theſe Diſcourſes, I would adviſe them to receive nothing, they may meet with in them, as "the truth of God", till they have impartially examined what is offered in proof of it as ſuch, from the ſacred books ; and are thereupon convinced, in their conſciencies, that it really is ſo. Their faith will now ſtand on a ſafe and ſure baſis, the word of him, whoſe ſtile is that, "faithful and true". And this, I would add, is the only way in which we ſhould always read the writings of others, upon the ſacred doctrines of ſcripture, however high an opinion we may have of their integrity, capacity, or ſuperior knowledge in divine things. We ſhall now uſe their labors as "helps", (which we reaſonably may) in order to our underſtanding the juſt import of the ſcripture ; and ſhall found our faith, not on what they ſay, but on what we are enabled, by their aſſiſtance, to perceive to be the word and will of God.

It would be extraordinary, if, thro' careleſſneſs, inattention, or the undue influence of ſome wrong biaſs or other, I have not been led into a miſ-conception of ſome of the "many texts", I have endeavoured to explain : Tho' I am not ſenſible, that this

this is the caſe. If I have been miſtaken, I have not knowingly been ſo. It is owing to the want of more underſtanding, and a better judgment, rather than to any fault in my will. The HOLY BIBLE, *and not any "human ſyſtem", or "fallible compoſure", has been my governing rule, in what I have preſented to the view of others: Nor have I ſaid any thing but as it appeared to me, upon a cloſe inquiry, to agree with this* ONLY TEST *of revealed truth.*

Poſſibly, there are ſome, who, upon reading what is herewith emitted, & perceiving its contrariety to their peculiar ſentiments, may be in a temper of mind, at once, to ſpeak of me, in their zeal, as a perverter of the "truth as it is in Jeſus", and to ſuch a degree as to be in a ſtate of wrath. Such cenſorious judging will give me no diſturbance, ſo long as thoſe words are to be found legibly wrote in the inſpired books, "who art thou that judgeſt another man's ſervant? To his own maſter he ſtandeth, or falleth.—Why doſt thou judge thy brother?—We ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt". Men's aſſuming to themſelves a right to determine what is "truth", or "falſehood", and to aſcertain the doom of others as they agree, or diſagree, with ſuch determination; eſpecially, if they do it with great poſitiveneſs and aſſurance, as though they were divinely authoriſed, and infallible, judges in the caſe, may ſtartle weak minds, and powerfully tend to impreſs on them a wrong biaſs: But it can convey no light into the underſtandings of any. It may excite a various motion in the paſſions of thoſe, who deſpiſe ſuch airs of ſuperiority and importance; and ſeldom fails of doing ſo: But it can have no rational aptitude to

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rectifie their miſtakes, if they labor of any; or to effect an alteration, for the better, in their ſentiments. It would argue a more manly, not to ſay chriſtian ſpirit, to endeavour their conviction only by fair and juſt reaſoning from the ſcriptures. This would be to apply to them as reaſonable creatures; and in no other way can we properly do ſo.

I ſhall only ſay further, the temper of my mind, reſpecting the following work, is ſuch, that I find within my ſelf a freedom as heartily to wiſh, on the one hand, that it may meet with no acceptance in the world, if fited "to deceive unwary ſouls, and turn them aſide from the ſimplicity of the goſpel"; as, on the other, that it may be received with approbation, and admited into the hearts of all that ſhall read it, if it ſhould exhibit, as I truſt it does, "the truth of the goſpel", by which we may be ſaved.

Boſton, *May* 4th. 1765.

Charles Chauncy.

Age of Dr C. 60 years.

SERMON

SERMON I.

Juſtification impoſſible by the Works of the Law.

GALATIANS II. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law: For by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified."

THE firſt and laſt clauſe in this verſe are expreſs in affirming negatively, that the method of juſtification before God is not by "the works of the law". And the affirmation extends univerſally; taking in one man as well as another, mankind without diſtinction or diſcrimination. "Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law". The words

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are ſpoken, not of any particular man, but of man as ſignifying the whole ſpecies, every individual that is of the rank we call men. So the Apoſtle explains himſelf in the other clauſe of the verſe, "by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified"; that is, no partaker of human fleſh, no man, whether he be Jew or Gentile, no one of the race of Adam. In this ſenſe preciſely the phraſe, "no fleſh", is uſed by this ſame Apoſtle, when ſpeaking, in the following chapter, ver. 11. upon this ſame ſubject. Says he, "no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight of God". In agreement wherewith is that prayer of pious David, * "enter not into judgment with thy ſervant", as grounded upon this reaſon, "for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified".

In further ſpeaking to the text it will be proper to explain the terms "juſtifie", and "the works of the law". The way will then be clear to illuſtrate the truth here affirmed, that "no fleſh", no man, "can be juſtified by theſe works".

As to the term "juſtifie", it is not an original Engliſh word, but borrowed from a Latin one (juſtificare): Neither is this latin word of ancient uſe among the beſt Roman writers; † but has been introduced ſince, by chriſtian divines, to expreſs the ſenſe of a ſcripture one, often to be met with, particularly in the Apoſtle Paul's epiſtles, eſpecially his epiſtles to the Romans and the Galatians. It's meaning is not, to make juſt; as to

* Pſalm 143. 2.

† Vid. Sir Charles Wolſeley, on juſtification evangelical.

to ſanctifie is to make holy. This may ſeem to be the ſenſe of the word, judging by its etymology. But its rarely, if ever, uſed, in the inſpired pages, as carrying in it this meaning. Tis rather to be underſtood in a law-ſenſe, alluding to the acquittance of an accuſed perſon upon a legal proceſs, and his being accounted juſt in oppoſition to the charge that was exhibited againſt him. It accordingly ſignifies to approve, accept, vindicate or adjudge as juſt. We ſhall exemplifie this in a few inſtances. The holy God is applied to in thoſe words, * "hear thou in heaven, and judge thy ſervants; condemning the wicked, and juſtifying the righteous". Where, "juſtifying the righteous" does not ſignifie, the making them righteous; but appearing for them in judgment, and vindicating them as ſuch. It is affirmed, † "He that juſtifieth the wicked is an abomination to the Lord". By "juſtifying the wicked" is not meant, the making them qualitatively juſt: This would be well-pleaſing to God: But it ſignifies a pleading for them, and defending them in judgment as juſt, while, at the ſame time, they are wicked. Hence that threatning of the Prophet, ‡ "Wo unto them, who juſtifie the wicked for a reward"; that is, vindicate them in judgment as righteous perſons, when the reverſe is their true character. And the word is uſed in this ſame ſenſe in the New-teſtament. "Not the hearers of the law are juſt before God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified"; § that is, ſhall be accounted and declared juſt in judgment. So tis ſaid of the Publican, in the goſpel of Luke, ‖

* 1 Kin. 8. 32. † Prov. 17. 5. ‡ Iſa. 5. 21, 23.
§ Rom. 2. 13. ‖ Chap. 18. 14.

that he "went down to his houſe juſtified rather than the Phariſee"; that is, approved by God, and accepted as juſt. In like manner we read, * "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died". By "God's juſtifying", we are evidently to underſtand his acquiting and vindicating in judgment as juſt; for it here ſtands oppoſed to condemnation.—But I need not multiply inſtances. Tis generally allowed, on all ſides, that the word, "juſtifie", is uſed in this judicial ſenſe throughout the ſcriptures; at leaſt in a ſenſe refering to this, and correſponding with it. Thô it ought to be remember'd, and heedfully remarked here, that no one can, in conſiſtency with truth, be judicially declared juſt, unleſs he really is ſo in the eye of that rule, whatever it is, by which he is tried; and, in conſequence of this, we may be ſure, that the righteous judge of all the earth will never approve of any man as juſt, and pronounce him to be ſo, if this be not the truth of his character, when compared with the meaſure of judgment in his caſe.

"Works of the law" are the other terms to be explained. Now, by "law", the Apoſtle ſometimes means law "in general", both the "law written in men's hearts", and in "the books of revelation". Sometimes he uſes the word more reſtrainedly to ſignifie the "Moſaic law" in ſpecial. But whether he underſtands by it the "natural" or "revealed law", or law "including both", works done in conformity to it, when mentioned with reference to juſtification, he always ſets aſide as

* Rom. 8. 33, 34.

as totally insufficient for the procurement of it. Accordingly, when he affirms, that, "by the works of the law, no one shall be justified", the thôt he would convey is obviously this, that justification is not obtainable "upon the foot of law", upon any claim grounded on works done in obedience to it. As if he had said, no man, whether he be Jew or Gentile, naked law, law considered simply in itself, being the rule of judgment, can be accounted, accepted or vindicated as just, upon the score of any works he has performed in obedience to it: Neither the Jew, upon works he has done in compliance with the law as published by Moses; nor the Gentile, upon the works he has done in obedience to the law of nature. And it may be added with equal truth, neither can the christian be justified in the meer virtue of any works he has wro't in compliance with the law, as promulged in the gospel by Jesus Christ, and his apostles. In short, all works, whether of Jews, Pagans, or Christians, are excluded from justification, law, rigid law, being the rule of tryal. They are totally and absolutely insufficient to procure for any man living an acquitance in judgment, a vindication as just and righteous.

And this, the way being prepared for it, I now come to make evident to you: In the doing of which I shall take the Apostle Paul for my instructor and guide. He, of all the sacred writers, is the most frequent and peremptory in affirming, that justification is obtainable by no son of Adam upon a plea of works, done in conformity to meer law. Nor does he barely assert this, but greatly enlarges in the proof of it. I shall make use of his

arguments upon this head, and endeavour to ſet them in a point of light that may be convincing.

In his epiſtle to the Romans, he has diſtinctly and largely proved, that mankind univerſally are ſinners, and therefore incapable of attaining to "the juſtification of life" upon the terms of naked law. The proof he has exhibited of this is contained in the three firſt chapters of this epiſtle; where we ſhall find a very melancholy account of the degenerate ſtate, the whole world, then conſiſting of Jews and Gentiles, had ſunk into. It cannot indeed be ſuppoſed, that the character he here draws of the Jews & Gentiles juſtly belonged, in all its lineaments, to either of them INDIVIDUALLY conſidered. There were, doubtleſs, among theſe bodies of men a conſiderable number, who had "eſcaped the pollutions" that were common in that day "thrô luſt": Nay, there is no reaſon to think but that ſome, at leaſt, of the INDIVIDUALS that conſtituted theſe collective bodies, were really good men, in the ſenſe in which the inſpired Solomon ſays, "a good man obtaineth favor of the Lord". But ſtill, it was true of them all, that they "had gone out of the way": Not indeed equally, conſidered as INDIVIDUALS, but in various degrees; ſome in one degree, others in another; but the generality in an high degree: inſomuch that the apoſtle might juſtly deſcribe them, in the groſs, as awfully corrupt. For this was the real truth of their character; tho' it might be ſaid of ſome of them, in the *individual* ſenſe, that they were ſinners in that view only in which it is affirmed, "there is not a juſt man that ſinneth not".

And that it was the intention of the apoſtle to give us to underſtand, that both Jews & Gentiles, mankind in common, were ſinners individually, as well as in a collective ſenſe, would ſeem evident beyond all reaſonable diſpute. Why elſe ſhould he uſe the terms of univerſality? Why the ſtrongeſt ones the language could furniſh him with? And why ſhould he, as it were, heap them upon one another? He is not content with ſaying, "all have ſinned"; but inſiſts that "there is none righteous, no not one"; that "there is none that doth good, no not one"; and that "all are gone out of the way". Surely, theſe terms muſt take in all the individuals of the human kind without exception. Had it been his deſign to include the whole world of men, he could not have expreſſed himſelf in words more full to his purpoſe. Beſides, the concluſion he introduces from the foregoing premiſes requires, that the terms uſed in them ſhould be explained in this univerſal ſenſe. How elſe could he ſay, "we have before proved, that every mouth is ſtopped", and that "all the world are become guilty before God"? How elſe could he infer, "therefore by the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in God's ſight"? And how elſe could he argue, that we are "juſtified freely by his grace," that is, by an act of his meer favor, in oppoſition to every plea as grounded on works done in obedience to the law, and to the utter excluſion of all boaſting?

It ſhould ſeem indubitably clear, that the Apoſtle's aim was to prove the impoſſibility of juſtification upon terms of law, and that his long thread

of reaſoning, in theſe chapters, was principally intended to ſettle this important point. But if, in conſequence of what he has offered, it is not fact, that both Jews and Gentiles are ſinners in the account of law, conſidered *individually* and *univerſally*, there is no argumentative connection between the point in view, and the reaſoning uſed to defend and ſupport it. Nay, if it were true of ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL, whether in the Jewiſh or Gentile world, that he was not a ſinner, judging of his character by meer law, the apoſtle has left his doctrine of the "unattainableneſs of juſtification upon the foot of law" without any ſolid proof; at leaſt in regard of that *univerſality*, in which he has aſſerted, and endeavoured to maintain it. He can, in a word, be looked upon as a coherent concluſive writer upon no other ſcheme than this, that Jews and Gentiles, *individually* as well *collectively* conſidered, were ſinners in the view of law, and therefore not within the poſſibility of being juſtified upon a tryal by ſo ſevere a rule.

I MAY not improperly remark here, that the apoſtle's reaſoning, with reſpect to the unattainableneſs of juſtification upon the terms of law, ought to be conſidered, as refering, not only to mankind as they exiſted at the time when he wrote, but in all after-ages of the world. For the conſequence he deduces, from his method of reaſoning, is in thoſe ſtrong terms of univerſality, "therefore, by the deeds of the law, there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight". "No fleſh", that is, no ſon of Adam, not one of the human race. Nor, unleſs he is to be underſtood as taking into his meaning mankind in all ages, have

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we, in theſe days, any concern with his doctrine of "juſtification without law": Whereas, he moſt certainly wrote with a view to after-ages as well as that in which he lived; deſigning to affirm and prove, that no ſon of man, in any age, till the end of time, could be juſtified upon law-terms: becauſe, in the eye of law, they could not but be found guilty before God. And the plain truth is, his reaſoning, upon this head, is as applicable to mankind univerſally in theſe days, as to mankind at the time when he wrote his epiſtle. For it is as true now as it was then, and has all along been ſo, that they have univerſally ſinned. Not that mankind, in all ages, have been ſinners juſt in the ſame degree as in the apoſtle's days: But they now are, and always have been, and always will be, ſinners in ſuch a ſenſe as that tis impoſſible they ſhould be juſtified by the rule of ſtrict law.

And this account of his reaſoning, it is obſervable, perfectly coincides with the repreſentations that are every where elſe, in ſcripture, given of this matter. Says the inſpired David,* "If thou, Lord, ſhouldeſt mark iniquities; O Lord, who ſhall ſtand"? And again,† "enter not into judgment with thy ſervant; for in thy ſight no man living ſhall be juſtified". To the like purpoſe is the reaſoning of Job, ‡ "How ſhould man be juſt with God? If he contend with him, he cannot anſwer him for one of a thouſand". To the ſame purpoſe ſtill are thoſe words of Solomon, § "There is not a juſt man upon the earth that doth

* Pſal. 130. 2. † Pſal. 143. 2. ‡ Chap. 9. 2, 3.
§ Eccleſ. 7. 20.

doth good, and ſinneth not". Agreable whereto the Apoſtle John aſſures us, * that " if we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us" : Yea, he declares † that " if we ſay we have not ſinned, we ſhall make God a liar, and his word is not in us".

I MAY pertinently add here, this ſcriptural account of our being univerſally ſinners, in the eye of law, moſt evidently accords with the experience of every man living. Who can lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, that it is clear of all ſin ? Who can look into his life, and declare with truth, that it has not, in a leſs or greater degree, been ſtained with " the pollutions that are in the world thro' luſt ? If any are thus pure in heart, and have given proof of it by their " holineſs in all manner of converſation", they muſt be thoſe good men, who, with pious David, " have walked in their integrity". And are there any among theſe who have never deviated from the path of duty ? Not one. They " have all ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God". And they are deeply ſenſible of it, and herefrom in readineſs to exclaim with the Pſalmiſt, ‡ " Who can underſtand his errors" ! and to join with him in the prayer to God which follows, " cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults". Far from imagining that they are perfect, and able, on account of their innocency, to ſtand a tryal at the bar of ſtrict law, they adopt the words of upright Job, ‖ humbly confeſſing, " if we juſtifie ourſelves, our own mouths would condemn us : If we ſhould ſay we are perfect, it ſhall alſo prove us perverſe". And, with Eliphaz,

* Epiſt. 1. 8. † Ver. 10. ‡ Pſal. 19. 12.
‖ Job 9. 20.

Eliphaz, their language is, * "What is man that he ſhould be clean, and he that is born of a woman that he ſhould be righteous"? In a word, there is no ſon of Adam, be his attainments in goodneſs ever ſo high, but feels within himſelf the truth of what the Poet ſays,

> Video, meliora proboque:
> Deteriora ſequor.
>
> I ſee the right, approve it too,
> Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong purſue.

Or of what is expreſſed in ſtill more ſtriking language by an inſpired pen, † "What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do. The good that I would, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do".

Now, if all men are ſinners, as having tranſgreſſed the law, how can they be juſtified upon the foot of law? It is not poſſible. Law, ſtrict law, being the rule by which they are tried, condemnation, and that only, muſt be the judicial reſult of a procedure upon their caſe. Should they be declared legally juſt, the ſentence would exhibit a manifeſt falſehood; it would be the effect of perverted judgment. For nothing ſhort of obedience without a failure, in any inſtance of duty, reſpecting either heart or life, could entitle them to an acquitance as righteous perſons. Could it be pleaded in their favor, that they had in ſome inſtances yielded obedience to the law, this would be of no avail; becauſe, in other inſtances, they had violated it, and the law demanded

* Job 15. 14. † Rom. 7. 15, 19.

manded obedience in theſe violated inſtances as truly as in the other. He that would be juſtified by his works, upon the terms of law, muſt not have one bad work among them all; for one bad one only, tho' it ſhould be attended with a great many good ones, would as certainly, if not in ſo high a degree, expoſe him to a ſentence of condemnation, as if his works were all bad, with the exception of one only that was good. Law, ſimple naked law, ſhews no favor. That is its language, "this do, and thou art righteous. If thou doeſt it not, thou art a ſinner." The conſequence wherefrom plainly is, that every man in the world, as he is a tranſgreſſor of the law, whether he has tranſgreſſed it in all inſtances or many, in a few or one only, is, on that account, in a ſtate of guilt, in the eye of the law, and therefore incapable of being juſtified by it. For tis a plain caſe, the law can faſten guilt upon no man, and at the ſame time acquit him as innocent. Tis impoſſible a ſentence of approbation and condemnation ſhould be the legal iſſue of a proceſs upon the ſame law, at the ſame time. This would be a glaring contradiction.

THUS I have dilated upon, and explained at large, one of the arguments the apoſtle Paul has uſed in proof of his aſſertion, "that no fleſh", no man, "can be juſtified by the works of the law". And it carries with it the ſtrongeſt conviction. Tis indeed an abſolutely concluſive one; and the more cloſely and ſtrictly it is examined, the more clearly it will appear to be ſo.

ANOTHER

ANOTHER argument of this ſame Apoſtle, in proof of this ſame point, and coinciding with that we have been conſidering, is to be met with in his epiſtle to the Galatians. Says he,* "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curſe". As if he had ſaid, they who expect to be juſtified upon the foot of works done in conformity to the law, be they as many as you will, they are all curſed by the law. And why? The reaſon follows in the next words, "for it is written, curſed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them". As if he had ſaid, the ſcripture writes thoſe accurſed, in the eſtimation of the law, who had not done, and gone on to do, all things that are enjoined by it. He does not proceed in a formal manner to prove, that no man has ever thus anſwered the requirements of the law; but leaves it with the conſcience of every man to declare to him the truth of this fact. And as every man has a witneſs within himſelf, that tells him this truth, he is conſtructively told likewiſe the conſequence from it, namely, that he is curſed by the law. And if the law curſes him, it cannot juſtifie him; if it convicts him of ſin, it can't acquit him from guilt; if it condemns him as a tranſgreſſor, it can't vindicate him as a righteous perſon.

THE Apoſtle again argues, that we can't be "juſtified by the law", or any works done in obedience to it, becauſe "by the law is the knowledge of ſin" † The law ſets before men's view, in a leſs or greater degree of light, what God commands,

* Chap. 3. 10. † Rom. 3. 20.

commands, and what he forbids; and every man, by comparing himſelf with the law, may know, and can't but know, that he has been a tranſgreſſor of it, either by omitting what it required, or by commiting what it prohibited. Even thoſe, who have no law but that which is "written on their hearts", may know, if it be not their own fault, "that they have done thoſe things which are worthy of death". Much more is this the truth in regard of thoſe, who, in addition to this "natural law", have had the law "revealed to them from heaven". By this clearer diſcovery of what is duty, and what is tranſgreſſion, they may be more fully convinced in their conſciences that they are ſinners in the eye of the law. And if they know by the law that they are ſinners, they muſt know alſo that, being ſuch, they are by the law incapable of juſtification. To ſuppoſe that any man could be accounted and declared juſt by that law, in the eſtimation of which he is a ſinner, is highly abſurd. As certainly therefore as every man knows, or may know, by the law, that he is an offender, ſo certainly does he know, or may know, that by the law it would be utterly vain to expect a vindication as righteous.

The Apoſtle yet further argues againſt our being juſtified by the works of the law, from the abſurd conſequences that would follow from ſuch a ſuppoſition: Two of which I ſhall particularly mention; and the rather, as they are matters of ſerious and great importance.

One is, that we ſhould not be indebted to grace, if we were juſtified by works. For "to him

him that worketh", ſo as to be entitled to juſtification on the ſcore of his works, " the reward would be reckoned, not of grace, but of debt". * And is this the ſcripture-way of men's being juſtified? No; ſays the apoſtle, " we are juſtified freely by God's grace". † And " if by grace, then not by works". ‡ And of ſuch conſequence is it, in the judgment of this apoſtle, that we ſhould depend upon " grace", and not upon " works", in the affair of juſtification, that he declares to the Galatians, ‖ " Whoſoever of you are juſtified by the law, ye are fallen from grace". Juſtification upon a plea grounded on works done in obedience to the law, and juſtification upon the foot of grace, the free favor of God, are ſubverſive of each other: Inſomuch that if we are juſtified by works, we cannot be juſtified by grace; and if we are juſtified by grace, we cannot be juſtified by works.

The other conſequence of our being juſtified by works is, the diſhonor it reflects on Chriſt. It renders his mediatorial interpoſition a needleſs thing, counter-acts the deſign of his coming into the world, and nullifies his death; making it of little or no importance in the buſineſs of ſalvation. To this purpoſe the apoſtle reaſons, § " If righteouſneſs comes by the law, then Chriſt is dead in vain". Agreably whereto he again argues, §§ " If they which are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promiſe made of no effect". As if he had ſaid, if they that will be juſtified by works in obedience to the law, may obtain

* Rom. 4. 4. † Rom. 4. 24. ‡ Ver. 27,28.
Chap. 11. 6. ‖ Chap. 5. 4. § Gal. 3. 21.
§§ Rom. 4. 14.

obtain the heavenly inheritance, then faith in Chriſt as the end of the law for righteouſneſs is needleſs, and the promiſe by grace thro' him is bro't to nought.

THESE are the genuine conſequences of the doctrine of juſtification upon the terms of law, if we may truſt to the reaſoning of the apoſtle Paul. And it was upon this account, principally, that he was ſo frequent and zealous in his oppoſition to it. He had been made to feel the abſolute inſufficiency of law and works in the great affair of the ſinner's juſtification, and knew that it could be effected in no way but that "of grace thro' Chriſt". This therefore was the way he carefully pointed out both to Jews and Gentiles, that is, to mankind univerſally. And he was abundant in his labors relative hereto; particularly in taking men off from their dependance on the law, as knowing that, if they ſought to be juſtified on the ſcore of their works in conformity to it, they would fruſtrate the grace of God, and render the whole work of Chriſt a thing needleſs, and to no purpoſe.

I HAVE now ſaid what may be tho't ſufficient, without any further enlargement, to make it evident, beyond all reaſonable diſpute, that "no fleſh", no man, „ can be juſtified by the works of the law".

BEFORE I proceed to make what has been diſcourſed practically uſeful, I would interpoſe a remark, which I eſteem an important one. It is

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this. The apoſtle Paul no where ſuggeſts, * that meer law, law ſeperated from grace and Chriſt, was

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* Tis true, he brings in Moſes thus deſcribing the righteouſneſs which is of the law, "the man that doth theſe things ſhall live by them", Rom. 10. 5. He does the ſame, Gal. 3. 12. "the man that doth them ſhall live in them". It may ſeem, at firſt ſight, as tho' the apoſtle ſuppoſed, in theſe texts, that the Jews might live upon the terms of their law, as a covenant of works; and that it was given them by God to this end. And in this ſenſe he has ſometimes been interpreted. The great Mr. Lock thus explains him, in his note upon Rom. 5. 20. But we ſhould make him flatly contradict himſelf, ſhould we underſtand him as intending to ſay, that life might be obtained by the Moſaic law, meerly as ſuch. For he expreſly declares, Rom. 4, 13, 14. "that the promiſe was not to Abraham, or to his ſeed, thro' the law, but thro' the righteouſneſs of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promiſe made of none effect". To the ſame purpoſe he teaches us, Gal. 2. ult, "if righteouſneſs comes by the law, Chriſt is dead in vain". When therefore he ſays, in a way of reaſoning, "the man that doth them ſhall live in them", he is to be conſidered as arguing with the Jews upon their own principles. Their law, as they interpreted it, promiſed life, life beyond the grave, eternal life in heaven, upon the SOLE CONSIDERATION of their obedience to it. The apoſtle, from this conſtruction which they, not he, put upon the Moſaic law, points out to them the impoſſibility of their obtaining life, by oppoſing the curſe to the promiſe, "curſed is every one that continueth not in all things written in book of the law to do them". It will be found, I believe, upon the cloſeſt examination, a difficult, if not impoſſible taſk, to make this apoſtle a conſiſtent coherent writer, upon any other ſcheme of interpretation. I ſhall add here, there is a ſenſe, in which the words, "the man that doth them ſhall live in them", is ſtrict-

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ever ſince the lapſe, whatever it might be before,* a divinely conſtituted method for the obtainment of life ; or that life could be obtained upon the foot of law, in this ſenſe, by any works done in conformity

ly true ; and this is, by viewing the law in its "ſpirit", and not according to the "letter" ; that is, as refering to the promiſe revealed to Adam, and afterwards repeated to Abraham, and connected, in the divine intention, "with the gift thro' Chriſt". A man, in this ſenſe of the law, might "live" in conſequence of his obedience to it ; tho' tis impoſſible he ſhould conſidering it as naked "law". And this,in fact, was the way in which the pious Jews, all along under the Moſaic diſpenſation, obtained life. And, interpreting the law in this ſenſe, that is, conſidering it in connection with grace and Chriſt, Moſes and Ezekiel might with truth ſay to the Jews, "ye ſhall keep my ſtatutes, which if a man do he ſhall live in them" ; tho', perhaps, ſuch declarations refer, not to "eternal life", but that "temporal one in Canaan", which, by a national covenant, was promiſed to the Jews, and could be enjoyed by them, only upon the foot of their obedience.

* Poſſibly, the rule of tryal the firſt father of men was under, in his innocent ſtate, was a "covenant of grace, revealed by Chriſt", then in "the form of God", tho' when he appeared in our world, it was "in faſhion as a man". Perhaps alſo, "faith in Chriſt", the revealer of this law of tryal, was the only ſpring of conduct upon which the life promiſed could be obtained. But however this might be, which I only mention en paſſant, thus much ſeems plain, that the original promiſe of life was not ſuſpended upon "perfect obedience" to what is commonly called "the natural or moral law of God". In contradiction hereto, I know, tis ſaid by moſt chriſtian writers, that the firſt man was ſo placed under this law,as that he muſt work his way to life by perfectly doing all things commanded by it ; inſomuch that he could not have obtained it, but

conformity to it, whether perfect, or imperfect. Far from saying thus, he declares, with great peremptoriness, that the supposition of coming to life by bare law would totally frustrate the grace

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but by persevering obedience in every point of duty, without the least failure. But this is said intirely without book. The scripture no where insinuates, that he was under "such a covenant of works". It suggests, on the contrary, that God, in favor to him, did not put him upon so severe a tryal for life. His tryal, if we may believe the sacred record of it, was in a "single instance", and this, not of doing, but of forbearing to do. Life and death were suspended upon his regard or disregard to a *divine restraint* laid upon him in one article only. This is the account the inspired Moses has given of the matter; and he has done it in words too plain and express to need any comment, or to admit of dispute. Read Gen. 2. 16, 17. Tis observable, that which was made the test of Adam's subjection to God, was a command, not of the moral, but positive kind; a command, not deducible from reason, but knowable only by revelation from heaven. It could not therefore be obeyed but from FAITH IN GOD, the revealer. Upon which it may, with all freedom, be affirmed, that our first father, while innocent, as really as any of his posterity, tho' not in the same sense, was TO LIVE BY FAITH. And it was owing to his UNBELIEF, however this was effected, that he "eat of the tree", concerning which God had said, "thou shalt not eat of it", thereupon incuring the threatned penalty "thou shall surely die". If Adam, from *faith* in the divine revelation, which put him upon a tryal for life, had abstained from eating of "the forbidden tree", he would, without all doubt, have had God for his instructor, guide, and constant assistant, so as that he would, in all instances, have obeyed "the natural moral law" as perfectly as one, of so low an order in the scale of being, can be supposed to have done. But his "thus obeying" was not the tryal God put him to for life, but a special one by immediate revelation, in

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of God, and nullifie the death of Chriſt. The caſe was plainly this. The Jews, in his day, had eſſentially corrupted the Moſaic law in their uſe of it with reference to eternal life. They conſidered it as a "covenant of works", depending on their

which FAITH was the only governing principle that could have ſecur'd him from death. It would be the exact truth, ſhould I ſay, that the firſt parents of men, while innocent, in common with their poſterity ſince the lapſe, could have obtained life in no way but that "of grace thro' faith". It is readily own'd, as the poſterity of the firſt pair, in conſequence of the lapſe, are under a ſentence which has doom'd them to death, there muſt be the diſcovery of "abounding grace" in delivering them from death, that they may live; and, as the life open'd to their view is not life in an earthly paradiſe, but in God's eternal kingdom, by a reſurrection that will make them incorrupible and immortal, there muſt be the diſplay of "ſuper-abounding grace": eſpecially, as this life is obtainable, notwithſtanding the "many offences", however aggravated, they may have been guilty of in their own perſons. It is acknowledged alſo, that the "object" of their faith is different. They muſt believe in God as "reconcilable to ſinners thro' Jeſus Chriſt", and as "reconciling them to himſelf not imputing to them their treſpaſſes". But ſtill, it was grace in God to man, while in his innocent ſtate, to make the promiſe of life; and faith in God, as the revealer of this promiſe, was that alone upon the foot of which he could have obtained this bleſſing. It may be worth remarking here, "the covenant of works" contraſted, in the ſacred books, with "the covenant of grace", is not any covenant of works God ever made with Adam; but "the Sinai-covenant" made with the Jewiſh nation. This is accordingly the covenant always meant, when we read of the "old covenant", the "firſt covenant", in oppoſition to the "new covenant", the "ſecond covenant", which ought to be heedfully minded in reading the ſcriptures; particularly the epiſtle to the Hebrews.

their legal obſervances, meerly as ſuch, for a title to life. It was this fundamental miſtake of their's that gave riſe to a great part of this Apoſtle's epiſtles to the Romans, and the Galatians; in which he labors to take them off from this uſe of the law, by ſhewing the impoſſibility of their ever being juſtified in this way. And he ſo manages his argument, as to make it equally concluſive, whether applied to Jews, or Gentiles. His reaſoning, in its real force, and juſt conſequence, extends univerſally; leaving every ſon of Adam deſtitute of any claim to life, as grounded on law only, or any works done in conformity to it. It was to illuſtrate this grand point, (which may be worthy of our ſpecial notice) that he introduces what he ſays upon the lapſe by the "one man" Adam, with it's conſequences relative to all his poſterity. And it gives his argument a moſt ſtriking force. For if both Jews and Gentiles, mankind univerſally, are ſubjected to "death" by means of the original lapſe, and, in conſequence of this ſubjection, are in ſuch a ſtate, as that they will certainly commit ſin in violation of the law, *

* Subjection to death, and *upon this* ſuch a liableneſs to commit ſin, as is inconſiſtent with the obtainment of life by law, without grace and Chriſt, are the TWO GRAND THO'TS, the Apoſtle would communicate by thoſe words, Rom. 5. 12. "Wherefore, as by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned". The lapſe of the "one man" Adam is here evidently repreſented as the original ſource both of SIN and DEATH. The Apoſtle not only affirms, that "death", in conſequence of this lapſe, "paſſed upon all men", but that "all have ſinned"; ſpeaking of that which certainly will be, as tho' it actually was:

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it is from hence demonſtrable, that the doctrine of juſtification, upon the foot of law, in oppoſiti- to grace and Chriſt, is an imaginary notion only. The great point in view with this Apoſtle was, to diſengage ſinners from "working for life", as tho'

a mode of diction not unuſual in the ſcripture. So tis ſaid concerning our Saviour, Heb. 2. 8. "Thou haſt put all things in ſubjection under his feet"; tho' it follows, in the latter part of the ſame verſe, "we ſee not yet all things put under him". In like manner, tis here declared concerning the whole human race, tho' vaſt multitudes of this race had not then come into exiſtence, that "death paſſed upon them", and that they "have all ſinned". And tis with real truth the apoſtle thus ſpeaks, becauſe, in conſequence of the lapſe, both "death" and "ſin", ſin as well as death, will be certain fact with reſpect to them all. They will all, after they have been in being, fall by the ſtroke of death; and they will all as certainly, when they become capable of moral action, become chargeable with ſin, ſo as to be beyond the poſſibility of juſtication upon the foot of law. Tis accordingly obſervable, mankind, judging of their character by meer law, are ever conſidered by this apoſtle as "ſinners". Hence that univerſal affirmation, Rom. 3. 9. "all are under ſin". And again, ver. 19. "all the world are become guilty before God". And yet again, ver. 23. "all have ſinned". The apoſtle means preciſely the ſame thing in the above-cited words, that he does in the paſſage we are upon, "all have ſinned". Only, he goes further here, and lets us into the true riſe, the occaſional cauſe, of this univerſal defection, namely, the lapſe of the "one man" Adam. But then, it ſhould always be particularly minded, as "ſin" and "death" are eſſentially different, the one being a natural, the other a moral evil, this lapſe of the firſt man is to be conſidered as the ſource of theſe evils in different ways, correſponding to the difference in their natures. And this leads me to exhibit a verſion of the latter

tho'they could obtain it upon the ſcore of any works they could do to this purpoſe. He never once called any ſon of Adam to work in this ſenſe, or gave him encouragement to hope for life, ſhould he work ever ſo perfectly.

latter clauſe of this 12th ver. which, ſhould it be new, may notwithſtanding ſerve to convey clear and juſt ſentiments concerning this important matter. I would read the verſe (droping its comparative form, that I may the more eaſily be underſtood) after the following manner, "by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon all men, (ἐφ ᾧ) UPON WHICH all have ſinned". As if the apoſtle had ſaid, by the "one man" Adam, ſin entered into the world, and death by his ſin in eating of the forbidden tree; and thus, by this one offence of this one man, death, in the ſenſe Moſes has given of it, hath come upon all men, WHEREUPON, UPON WHICH, IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH they have all ſinned, ſpeaking of that which certainly will be, as tho' it now was. The apoſtle had it in his view, as I imagine, not only to repreſent "death" and "ſin", with reſpect to the whole human race, as taking riſe from the lapſe of the one man Adam, but to ſuggeſt the different ways in which this is done. The judicial ſentence of God, occaſioned by the one offence of this one man, is that which faſtens "death", with all its natural cauſes and appendages, upon the human kind; and tis IN CONSEQUENCE of this ſentence, UPON men's coming into exiſtence under the diſadvantages ariſing from it, that they "ſin" themſelves. Tis obſervable, the apoſtle having ſaid, "by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin", this ſin of his, does not go on to ſay, "and ſo death and ſin have paſſed upon all men"; but "death", in this way, "paſſed upon all men", ἐφ ᾧ, UPON WHICH, IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHICH, they have ſinned themſelves. It is with great exactneſs the apoſtle has here expreſſed himſelf. And he purpoſely did it, as I conceive of the matter, to carry

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LET us then, as the improvement of what has been ſaid, fix it in our hearts as an indiſputed truth, that we cannot be "juſtified by the works of the law". And as we would hope, for an acquitance at the bar of God's judgment, let our view be to the free favor of God, and the atoning blood of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. For, if we are ever vindicated in judgment, it muſt be "by grace, thro'

our tho'ts up to Adam as the true original ſource of SIN as well as DEATH; and to give us to underſtand, at the ſame time, that he is the ſource of theſe evils in different ways: Of "death", by the ſentence of God, taking riſe from the one offence of this one man; and of "ſin", UPON or IN CONSEQUENCE of this, by reaſon of that frail, mortal, unhappy ſtate, to which we are ſubjected in this world of vanity, toil and ſorrow. It would be eaſy to point out the way in which mankind become "ſinners" UPON, or IN CONSEQUENCE OF, their ſubjection to death thro' the lapſe of their firſt father, and to do this under the guidance of the Apoſtle Paul, whoſe MODE OF DICTION, in numerous paſſages in his epiſtles, is emphatical upon the above interpretation of his words, but ſcarce intelligible upon any other ſuppoſition;—but to ſay any thing upon theſe points would oblige me to digreſs too far. I ſhall only add, the prepoſition, επι, joined with a dative caſe, is ſcarce ever uſed, in the new-teſtament, but in the ſenſe I have given it. I have now by me at leaſt ſeventy texts, wherein it ſtands to denote the OCCASIONAL CAUSE of the things ſpoken of, or that *by which, thro' which, upon which, in conſequence of which,* they are as they are repreſented to be. Nor is it an objection of any weight, that I don't make the relative ω, in my way of conſtruction, to agree with either of the foregoing ſubſtantives, but take for its antecedent the immediately foregoing ſentence. Every one, in the leaſt acquainted with the rules of language, muſt know, that a foregoing ſentence may properly be, as

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thro' the redemption that is in him". And bleſſed be God we may, in this way, obtain " the juſtification of life". Tis the way God has provided for us, and revealed to us ; and he was pleaſed to reveal it even from the day of the lapſe of the firſt progenitor of men. And, in truth, had not the father of mercies intended to have dealt with the poſterity of Adam in a way of grace, or goſpel, he would not, I believe, have ſuffered them to come into being He would rather have prevented this, by the execution of death upon the firſt man, ſo ſoon after his lapſe as to have left no room for his having poſterity. It was owing to grace, that he did not cut him off immediately upon his diſobedience in the ſpecial article wherein he was tried. And, perhaps, no good reaſon can be aſſigned, why grace ſhould continue him in life ſo as to have poſterity, if it had not been the intention of God, that his poſterity ſhould be within the poſſibility of acceptance with heaven, upon the plan of mercy thro' Jeſus the Saviour.

And

it often really is, antecedent to a following adjective. And tis remarkable, the phraſe, εφ ω, is uſed by the Apoſtle Paul in three places beſides this we have been illuſtrating ; and, in all of them, the prepoſition, εφ, has the ſame meaning I have given it here : And, what may be worthy of ſpecial notice, the relative, ω, grammatically agrees, not with a preceding ſubſtantive, but ſentence. The places I refer to, as in the original language, not in the engliſh tranſlation, are 2 Cor. 5. 4. Philip. 3. 12. and 4. 10. This ſame Apoſtle has once uſed the phraſe, εφ οις, the plural of ω ; and in the ſame ſenſe ſtill, and in the ſame way of grammatical conſtruction too, Rom. 6. 21. I could eaſily have placed theſe criticiſms in a clear and ſtrong point of light ; but the hints I have given muſt ſuffice for an occaſional note.

And that this was really the intention of God ſeems very evidently ſuggeſted in the ſacred writings. For, tis remarkable, "the ſentence of condemnation", occaſioned by the lapſe, is ſpoken of as poſterior to the promiſe of a Saviour. God firſt declared, "the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head", and after this pronounced the judicial ſentence, "duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return". This promiſe, without all doubt, was intended as a remedy againſt the diſadvantages which Adam had bro't upon himſelf, and conſequentially upon his poſterity, by means of his "one offence"; and by it they were all put into ſuch a ſtate as that, thro' the "promiſed ſeed of the woman", it became poſſible for them to be juſtified and ſaved. The Apoſtle Paul certainly viewed the matter in this light. Hence, * he declares, "that the creature, [by which phraſe he muſt needs include mankind] was made ſubject to vanity in hope".† Of what? It follows in the next verſe, "that § the creature itſelf §§ ſhall be delivered from the bondage of corruption

* In the 8th Chap. of his epiſtle to the Romans, ver. 20.

† επ ελπιδι, in conſequence of ſome previous ground for hope. This interpretation perfectly falls in with the proper force and meaning of the prepoſition επι, join'd with a dative caſe. And it is an interpretation grounded on the truth of fact: For man was not judicially "ſubjected to vanity", till after a door of hope had been opened to him by expreſs revelation from God.

§ So the particle ὁτι is rendered a thouſand times in the new-teſtament; and ſo it ought to have been rendered here.

§§ The original words, καὶ αυτὴ ἡ κτισις, are emphatically ſtrong; as meaning, "even the ſelf-ſame creature" that had been ſubjected to vanity.

ruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" ; which would have been impoſſible upon the plan of law, but is eaſily to be accounted for upon the ſcheme of grace thro' the promiſed Saviour. He very obviouſly leads us into the ſame way of thinking upon the matter, when he ſays, * "as by the offence of one judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, even ſo by the righteouſneſs of one the free gift came upon *all men* unto juſtification of life. † What intelligible meaning can be given to this text, if the poſterity of Adam, thro' the righteouſneſs of one, were not within the poſſibility of attaining the juſtification of life ? I may add here, tis the expreſs declaration of him, who is "head over all things", "that all that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God, and come forth". ‡ Tis put beyond all doubt, by theſe words, that mankind univerſally ſhall be raiſed from the dead. But how is this poſſible according to the courſe of law ? Law, as ſuch, knows no mercy. According to law, if mankind are once dead, they muſt be forever dead. Tis nothing but the interpoſition of grace can deliver them from the power of the grave. And as they ſhall be thus delivered, and this univerſally, tis as certain that they are herein dealt with upon the foot of grace, as that death paſſes upon them, § death would otherwiſe everlaſtingly

* In his 5th Chap. 8th ver.

† The original words, anſwering to the engliſh ones, "*all men*", are the ſame in both parts of the compariſon.

‡ John 5. 28, 29.

§ If any ſhould object and ſay, a reſurrection from the dead is no argument of grace in God, becauſe it will be, to many, "a reſurrection to damnation, and not ſalvation" ;

everlaſtingly reign over them. Thoſe who imagine, that any of Adam's poſterity are ſo under law, as not to be at the ſame time under grace, might do well to turn the tho't in their minds, how it is poſſible, upon this ſcheme, that they ſhould, after they were once dead, be bro't back to life again? I ſhall ſubjoin yet further, the ſcripture give us reaſon to think, that men's condition, in another world, ſhall be determined, at the great day, not according to the rigor of law, but the goſpel-plan of grace. Ought not thoſe obſervable words of the Apoſtle Paul, * to be interpreted to this purpoſe, "In the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men according to my goſpel"? That is, the mercy revealed in that goſpel, I, in an eſpecial manner, have been commiſſioned to preach to the world. It may be worthy of remark, the apoſtle had been ſpeaking, in the foregoing verſes, of Gentiles as well as Jews, which then comprehended the whole world of mankind, and affirms in this text, with reference to ſalvation"; the anſwer is obvious: Is it no favor to live under the light of the goſpel, rather than in pagan darkneſs, ſince many, thro' their abuſe of the goſpel, will be the more miſerable in another world? Are the bounties of common providence no proof of the goodneſs of God to men, becauſe, by their miſimprovement of them, they may "treaſure up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath"? The race of Adam, by an abſolute grant of God, delivering them from the power of the grave, are put within the poſſibility of a glorious immortality after death: And if, by their own folly, in miſimproving this advantage, they expoſe themſelves to "a ſecond death", ſhall the grace of God be reflected upon? Tis highly unreaſonable, and baſely ungrateful.

* Rom. 2. 16.

to them all indiſcriminately, that they ſhall be hereafter judged "according to his goſpel". And if they will be thus judged, it muſt be according to the revelation of the grace that is in Jeſus Chriſt.

THIS view of the ſtate of Adam's poſterity at once cuts off all occaſion for murmuring and complaint, tho' our condition is ſuch, that if law ſhould be the rule of our tryal, we muſt unavoidably fall under a ſentence of condemnation. For we may be "ſaved by grace thro'Chriſt", tho' ſalvation is impoſſible upon the foot of law. Shall we then any of us be ſo unadviſed, as to ſeek to be juſtified by works done in conformity to the law? This has all along been the great folly of mankind. Tho' conſcious to themſelves that they are ſinners, it has been their way to betake themſelves to doings of their own, in one form or another, to procure the favor of God, and their acceptance as righteous in his ſight. 'Tis ſaid of the Jews, in the days of the Apoſtles, who "followed after the law of righteouſneſs", that they "attained not to the law of righteouſneſs". And why? The reaſon follows, "becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law". * And it may, with equal truth, be ſaid of moſt chriſtians ſo called, that neither have they "attained to a juſtifying righteouſneſs"; and for the like reaſon, "becauſe they have ſought for it in virtue of the deeds they have done in imagined conformity to the law." Law, as we have heard, is rigidly ſevere; making no abatement, admitting of no excuſes, and ſhewing no mercy. The man that fails in his compliance with its demands, tho' it ſhould be in one article only,

* Rom. 9. 31, 32.

only, inſtantly comes under condemnation. We can't therefore take a more effectual method to faſten ruin upon ourſelves, than by ſeeking to obtain deliverance from it upon the terms of law. Our caſe indeed is abſolutely deſperate, while law, or any works we have done in obedience to it, is what we depend upon for an acquitance in judgment. No ſon of Adam, in any age, in any place, or under any diſpenſation of God, was ever juſtified in this way, or could have been. For, in the eye of law, "the whole world is guilty beforeGod". Let us be ſo each one of us in the view we have of ourſelves. Inſtead of "truſting in ourſelves", with the proud Phariſee, "that we are righteous", let us be abaſed before God in a ſenſe of our manifold weakneſſes and defects, not to ſay the groſs miſcarriages we have too often been betrayed into. Surely, we have no cauſe of pride on account of our works of righteouſneſs. They have been attended with ſo much frailty and imperfection, even the beſt of them, that if God ſhould examine them with rigor, we could not ſtand ſo ſevere a tryal. Let us, with the Apoſtle Paul, "count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord"; yea, let us "count them but dung that we may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having our own righteouſneſs, which is of the law; but that which is thro' the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith". And we may now, upon a juſt foundation, hope for acceptance with God here, and an acquitance at the bar of judgment hereafter; to be pronounced bleſſed, and to be bid to enter into the joy of our Lord, which God grant, &c.

SERMON

SERMON II.

The Queſtion anſwered, "wherefore ſerveth the Law"?

GALATIANS II. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law:—For by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified."

IF it is impoſſible, that any of the human race ſhould be "juſtified by the works of the law", as the Apoſtle Paul affirms in my text, and as we have abundantly proved in a former diſcourſe from it, it may naturally be enquired,

WHY then was the law introduced among the Jews? What was the ſpecial view or God in revealing it to them from Sinai, in the days of Moſes? Nor may this be eſteemed a queſtion of trivial importance. The apoſtle Paul, having diſcourſed to the Galatians upon the unatainableneſs

neſs of juſtification "by the deeds of the law", tho't it proper to put the queſtion, "wherefore then ſerveth the law"? As if he had ſaid, if it be true, as I have been proving it to be, that the Jews could not be acquited as righteous perſons upon the ſcore of works done in obedience to the law, it may, with great pertinency, be aſkt, why was the law given to them? Why did God, in ſo ſolemn a manner, promulge it from heaven, and put them under the obligations of it? To this important queſtion the apoſtle has given a direct and poſitive anſwer. But, before I come to mention his anſwer, and dilate upon it ſo as to make it eaſy and familiar, I would previouſly remark,

That the poſterity of Abraham, 430 years before the giving of the law, were put, by God himſelf, into the way of "juſtification without law", or in other words, upon the foot of "grace thro' the promiſed ſeed". This was the main thing intended, when he repeatedly ſaid to Abraham, "I will be your God, and the God of your ſeed. In thee ſhall all nations of the earth be bleſſed". The "goſpel" was now ſummarily preached to Abraham, as it had been before to Adam; that ſame goſpel which has ſince been particularly explained in the writings of the new-teſtament. And the "mercy" hereby promiſed to him lay at the bottom, as the true and great baſis of the whole ſcheme of the divine conduct with reference to the jewiſh nation. It was owing to this mercy in particular, and to this only, that it became poſſible for them to obtain acceptance with God in this world, and admiſſion to glory and immortality beyond the grave.

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THE introduction of the law among the Jews muſt therefore be conſidered, not as intended by God to oppoſe, much leſs to ſet aſide, the covenant he had made with their father Abraham; but to ſubſerve, in ſome view or other, the obtainment of the bleſſing promiſed in it. If, by the covenant with Abraham, the Jews were put into a way, in which they might be juſtified and ſaved, it was impoſſible the law ſhould be given to counter-act this intention of divine mercy. "The law", in ſuch a view of it, "would be againſt the promiſe", which the apoſtle Paul rejects, with a "God forbid";* and with good reaſon, for it would be ſo againſt the promiſe as to "diſannul it"; which, as the ſame inſpired writer aſſures us, would be highly abſurd to ſuppoſe.† The law was certainly introduced among the Jews as an inſtance of favor to them. God deſigned by it to promote their good; and had they regarded it in ſubſerviency to the promiſe, with which it was connected in the divine intention, it would have turned out to their ſpiritual and eternal advantage.

I AM not inſenſible, that the apoſtle Paul expreſly ſpeaks of the law,‡ as "the miniſtration of death", and "of condemnation". And I am fully ſatisfied he has herein given an accurately juſt account of the law. But then, it ought always to be remember'd, when he thus ſpeaks of the law, he underſtands by it "meer law", law "ſeparated from grace and Chriſt". It was by the law, in this ſenſe, that the Jews expected "the juſtification of life". This, to be ſure, was eminently

* Gal. 3. 21. † Gal. 3. 17. ‡ 2 Cor. 3. 7, 9.

nently their fault in the days of the apoſtles: For which reaton, even thoſe among them who profeſſed faith inChriſt,contended earneſtly for an adherence to the law, as what was neceſſary in order to their obtaining the favor of God. But they were herein egregiouſly miſtaken. And it was this miſtake of their's that gave occaſion for numerous paſſages in Paul's epiſtles, from which it may with certainty be collected, that juſtification was obtainable even while the law ſubſiſted. But how? Not "thro' the law", but in virtue of "the promiſe founded in Chriſt", with which it was connected in the view of God. To this purpoſe he argues, * "The promiſe was not to Abraham, or to his ſeed, thro' the law; but thro' the righteouſneſs of faith". That is to ſay, the promiſed grant of life was not made upon "terms of law", but in quite another method here ſignified by "the righteouſneſs of faith". He adds, in the words that immediately follow, "if they which are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promiſe made of no effect". Parallel hereto is that text, † "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promiſe; but God gave it to Abraham by promiſe". And that the law did not exclude the promiſe; but that the Jews, notwithſtanding the law, were ſtill to have their dependance on the promiſe for life, he argues from this, that "the covenant with Abraham was confirmed in Chriſt", unalterably ſettled and eſtabliſhed with a view to him, "430 years before the law was given by Moſes"; ſo that the law could not be introduced in the room of the promiſe, or to ſet it aſide, without making void a ſolemn

* Rom. 4. 13. † Gal. 3. 18.

ſolemn contract, after it had, in an authentic manner, been confirmed. His reaſoning runs thus, * "Brethren, I ſpeak after the manner of men; tho' it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man diſannulleth, or addeth thereto.—And this I ſay, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Chriſt, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot diſannul, that it ſhould make the promiſe of none effect". Tis abundantly evident from theſe texts, that "the juſtification of life", tho' unattainable by the law, was yet attainable under the law, in virtue of the abrahamic covenant, which it neither did, nor could, ſet aſide. It is evident alſo, that it was not the intention of the law to fruſtrate, or, in any meaſure, oppoſe, the operation of the promiſe, but that it was rather deſigned to promote it by its actings in ſubſerviency to it.

It may, I think, be juſtly collected from what has been thus previouſly remarked, that the "Moſaic law", meerly as ſuch, was not intended by God as a "covenant of life". His view herein was not to let the Jews, or any of the race of men, know, that perfect innocency was the way in which they were to obtain the favor of God to eternal life; or that, unleſs they were thus innocent, they ſhould be "caſt into priſon till they had paid the utmoſt farthing". Had this been the deſign of God in publiſhing his law from Sinai, it would have been abſolutely inconſiſtent, not only with his promiſe to Abraham, "I will be your God, and the God of your ſeed"; but with that more ancient one to the firſt father of men,

* Gal. 3. 15, 17.

" the ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head". The law of God, it is true, being a perfect rule of righteouſneſs, always did, and always muſt, require perfect innocency. And God's ſetting it before the world, as he does in the promulgation of it, may powerfully tend to lead them into juſt apprehenſions of their duty, and convince them from thence of their unhappy condition, ſhould they be dealt with according to the requirements of law : But it could not be deſigned to let them know, that they could find acceptance with heaven in no way but by " perfectly" keeping the law. This would be to ſubſtitute the law in the room of grace, and, in reality of ſenſe, to alter the method the wiſdom of God, excited by his goodneſs, has contrived for the juſtification of ſinners.

An obvious corollary now preſents itſelf. It is this. That ſinners ought not to be told, that they muſt be " perfect",* that they muſt " unerringly

* This is what the author of the " letters on Theron and Aſpaſio" tells thoſe, who, while deſtitute of " the ſalutary truth", would do any thing that they might obtain life. " If they attempt to do *in any ſenſe*, they bind themſelves to do all". The requirement of them is, " *every thing*, or *nothing*", pag. 285. He accordingly ſums up what they have to do in theſe words, pag. 387. " Be perfect, keep the commandments, and thou ſhalt live. The obligation of the law is eternal, ſo can never be looſed". If the " obligation of the law is thus indiſſoluble", why does he ſpeak of himſelf, pag. 10. " as ready to ſhew, that all objections and impediments have been, by a *particular divine edict* for the purpoſe, removed and diſpenſed with in favor of all, who are ſincerely diſpoſed, whenever they ſhall be

erringly keep the commandments of the law in order to their obtaining eternal life". It may be proper to ſet the law before their view, in its abſolute purity and perfection, to point out to them the miſery of their condition, while law is the rule of judgment in their caſe. But to tell them, that they muſt be " perfect" in their regards to

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be found" ? Why does he bring in the bleſſed God, pag. 90. " aſſuring every man, who ſhall ſincerely re-
" pent, or turn from his evil way, and do that which
" is lawful and right, that he ſhall be happy [that is,
" as he means here, in the *ſole virtue* of his repentance
" and righteouſneſs, without any view to Chriſt] and
" no mention made of his former faults ; and con-
" firming al his by his oath, that there might be no
" remaining doubt or heſitation in the minds of men,
" about their acceptance with God, as ſoon as they
" are reformed" ? If our author can reconcile " this particular edict", and " aſſurance from the God of truth", with a " law-obligation that is eternally indiſſoluble", he may claim the honor of doing that which no man has ever yet done, that is, of making both parts of a contradiction true. Beſides, if the law requires perfect *perſonal* obedience, and " its obligation can never be looſed", how came Chriſt to be admitted to do & ſuffer in the ſinner's ſtead ? This principle ſtrictly adhered to, will nullifie the whole ſcheme of grace thro' Chriſt. It is indeed a flat contradiction to the revealed character of God. But to paſs theſe things. If one ſhould put the queſtion to our author, what law of heaven ever required men perfectly to keep the commandments IN ORDER TO LIFE ? he would, perhaps, find himſelf greatly puzzled to give a juſt anſwer. Was it the law man was placed under in paradiſe ? Tis as evident as words can make it, that life, even in man's innocent ſtate, was a matter of grace, and ſuſpended upon a ſingle article of forbearing to do ; and this, from a principle of faith in a revelation from

God.

the law, or that damnation will be the conſequence, is to apply to them as tho' God had provided no Saviour, and had made no revelation of his grace towards ſinners ; yea, it is, in true conſtruction, to overlook the whole goſpel-ſcheme of mercy, and to make void both the life and death of Jeſus Chriſt.

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God. See a preceding note, pag. 18, 19, 20.—Was it a law given to man immediately after the lapſe ? The all-merciful God, even before he pronounced the ſentence, dooming man to death, ſummarily revealed " the grand ſalutary truth", by promiſing, that " the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head". And by promulging this promiſe, a conſtitution of grace was erected, conformably to which eternal life became obtainable by Adam, and all his poſterity. How ? Not by " perfectly doing" ; but by " believing in the ſeed God had promiſed". And as this method of grace was eſtabliſht immediately upon the lapſe, it has all along been, now is, and always will be, the one only way to life for ſinful man.—Was it the law publiſhed from Sinai ? If we conſider this law as a " national covenant", containing the terms upon which the Jews ſhould hold the land of Canaan, and live in the quiet happy poſſeſſion of it, no other people had any concern with it. Tho' it ought to remembered here, this law, ſo far as its precepts were of a moral nature, being founded in reaſon, and not poſitive injunction, was obligatory upon all others as a rule of duty, wherein they might come to the knowledge of it. It ought alſo to be very heedfully minded, this political law, or national covenant, was ſo conſtructed as to be, in the deſign of God, a figure, type, or emblematical repreſentation of that GOSPEL, which had been preached to Abraham, and has ſince been preached to all the world, and is the only foundation upon which eternal life is obtainable. God has promiſed it in no other way ; and to go to work for it in any other way, whether by perfect or imperfect obedience,

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We may accordingly lay it down for certain, that, when the holy God is introduced, by the prophet Ezekiel, as ſwearing by his life, "the ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die; but if a man be

no matter which, would be, virtually and in reality of ſenſe, to ſet up a method for obtaining life in direct oppoſition to that, which God has already eſtabliſhed. This was the great fault of the Jews, particularly in the times of Chriſt and his apoſtles. They intirely miſtook the "true ſpirit" of their law, as it related to eternal life. In their obſervance of it, they regarded the "letter only", overlooking its ultimate intention, which was its very "life and ſoul". It accordingly became "a miniſtration of death" to them, and not "of life". And why? Not becauſe they did not perfectly obey it; for if they had, according to "the letter", it would ſtill have been "the miniſtration of condemnation"; becauſe their obedience would have been without "ſpirit", that is, it would have been obedience detached from "goſpel", which was the "life and ſpirit" of the law. No perfection, could we ſuppoſe it angelic, ſeparate from grace and Chriſt, could have given a Jew a title to life, becauſe that God, whoſe gift it is, had not promiſed it in that way.—There is no law now left that can require "perfect doing" IN ORDER TO LIFE, unleſs it be that which is commonly called, "the law of nature". But what law is this? Is it a law naturally imprinted on men's minds, which tells them, either directly, or by the exerciſe of the powers they are endowed with, what God's requirements are, at the ſame time ASSURING them, that, upon their compliance with them, they ſhall LIVE FOREVER? Nothing is more certain, than ſuch a law of nature never exiſted but in imagination only.—Is this law that rule of right, which God knows to be the meaſure of men's duty to him, and of what it is fit he ſhould do for, or inflict upon, them, as they are either obedient, or diſobedient? There is, without all doubt, ſuch a rule of men's

duty

juſt and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live", his meaning (whatever it was) could

duty towards God, and of God's conduct towards men in a way of reward, or puniſhment, according to their works. But yet, none of the ſons of Adam, by the mere exerciſe of their natural powers, ever yet attained to a perfect knowledge of this rule. Moſt certainly, they are unable, after all their reaſonings, to ſay, what puniſhment, as to kind, or degree, or duration, would be their due in caſe of ſin, or what reward it would be proper for God to beſtow upon them in caſe of obedience. God alone is abſolutely & fully acquainted with " this rule of right" ; and we can be clearly and certainly acquainted with it only by revelation from him. And ſuch revelation man has all along, from the beginning, in his innocent and lapſed ſtate, been favored with. This revealed law therefore is the only one we have any concern with AS THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE. Inſhort, whatever law of nature be ſuppoſed, tis ſuperſeded by revelation ; which is the " only rule" God will obſerve in the beſtowment of life after death. And yet, our author, inſtead of directing men to exert themſelves, in the uſe of means, to obtain that " faith" in the revelation of God, without which tis impoſſible they ſhould inherit life, points their endeavours another way, boldly telling them, if they will do any thing, they muſt " be perfect". And why ? Becauſe truly this they are obliged to by a ſuppoſed " law of nature, whoſe obligation is eternal, and cannot be looſed". Tis upon this fond conceit of his, that he has, with ſo much prophane levity, perverted the ſenſe of a great part of the bible ; making the calls of God, which are all founded on the plan of grace thro' Chriſt, not calls of mercy, but to obey " his imaginary law" ; hereby turning the grace of God, in reality of conſtruction, into a wanton inſult on his poor ſinful creatures.

☞ " Our author", in the following notes, always means " the writer of the letters on Theron and Aſpaſio". The pages refer'd to, in theſe letters, agree with the ſecond edition, printed at Edingburg, 1759.

could not be to put the Jews under the law, as "a covenant of life". * For he had, many hundreds

* As the promiſed life, and threatned death, in the 18th and 33d chapters of Ezekiel, are ſuppoſed, by our author, (whether juſtly, or not, I ſhall not now diſpute) to refer to the eternal world, and to mean happineſs and miſery there, tis ſtrange he ſhould firſt underſtand, by "the righteouſneſs required", that which would, on its own account, ſave from the one, and give a title to the other. Tis more ſtrange, he ſhould then ſpeak of "repentance", as what would ſerve, inſtead of perfect righteouſneſs, to deliver the ſinner from death, and in its own proper virtue too. Tis moſt of all ſtrange, beyond meaſure ſo, that he ſhould introduce the faithful God, not only declaring to the Jews, that he would bleſs them with life upon theſe terms, but ſolemnly giving his oath to the truth of this declaration, pag. 90. If the calls, in theſe chapters, to "turn from their evil ways", and to "do that which is juſt and right", are interpreted, as they ought to be, as ſo many exhortations, upon the plan of grace thro' the promiſed ſeed, they would be at once intelligible in themſelves, and conſiſtent with the common language of the bible, and the grand ſcheme the father of mercies has had in proſecution from the beginning of the world. But to explain them, as this author does, as commands, a compliance with which would, in its own virtue, give a claim to life; and to bring in the holy God ſwearing to the truth of it, is at once to abuſe the ſcripture, and impeach the divine veracity and purity. Will that God, who is as juſt as he is good, admit ſinners to his favor upon the *ſole conſideration*, either of obedience or repentance, perfect or imperfect? What an aſpect has this upon the great atonement by the blood of Chriſt? How will it conſiſt with the character, under which God has all along revealed himſelf from the day of the lapſe? Is it in itſelf a truth, or falſehood, to ſay, that doing or repenting, ſeparated from grace and Chriſt, will avail to give the ſinner a title

dreds of years before this, as ſolemnly ſwore that he would be a "God to them" to all ſaving everlaſting purpoſes, in a way quite oppoſite to this of perfectly conforming to the requirements of law. The obtainment of life by law, and the obtainment of it by grace, are abſolutely incompatible

title to eternal life? Surely, no one, knowing what he ſays, will affirm it to be a truth. Tis indeed impoſſible it ſhould be, if what the inſpired writers unitedly declare, in the ſacred books, may be tho't worthy of regard, And yet, our author makes the infinitely true God a voucher to its truth, and by a ſolemn oath too. He will, perhaps, ſay, there is an IF in the caſe. Life is connected with "doing or repenting", which will never come into event; becauſe no ſinner can either do or repent in the ſenſe intended. But what a pitiful ſhift is this! How diſhonorary to the father of mercies, and God of all ſincerity! Notwithſtanding this IF, the ſuppoſition that is the ground of it, is a REAL FALSHOOD; becauſe a direct contradiction to the revealed method of God's admitting ſinners to his favor. And ſhall "the holy one of Iſrael", who is infinitely removed from all guile, be introduced as connecting THIS FALSHOOD, abſolutely ſo in itſelf, with an IF, that it might not too viſibly carry with it the face of downright deceit? Far be it! The true purport of our author's comment on God's words, by the prophet Ezekiel, to the Jewiſh nation, and indeed to ſinners in general, is plainly this, "tho' tis IMPOSSIBLE, as you are ſinners, you ſhould have a title to life, in the *meer virtue*, either of turning from your ſins, or doing righteouſneſs; yet, I ſolemnly ſay to you, and ſwear by my life to the truth of what I ſay, this IMPOSSIBILITY notwithſtanding, if you will do ANOTHER, that is, thus turn from ſin and do that which is right, which you can no more do than you can create a world, you ſhall aſſuredly obtain life". I have not done the leaſt wrong to our author in this paraphraſe

patible with each other. The Jews could not therefore be put upon obtaining life by works done in obedience to law, while, at the ſame time, they were put upon obtaining it upon the plan of grace thro' Chriſt. "The law", in this view of it, "would be againſt the promiſe", and "the promiſe againſt the law". Two oppoſite and inconſiſtent diſpenſations would be in force at the ſame

paraphraſe of his meaning. Tis the very thing he intends, however impious and abſurd it may look, at the firſt glance, thus ſet in its true light. And his conduct hereupon, placed in the like point of clear view, will make the like appearance. Under the ſpecious pretext of guarding ſinners againſt the heinous crime of "ſelf-juſtifying labor", he zealouſly diſcourages them, however diſtreſt about their ſpiritual ſtate, from doing any thing, ſending up ſo much as a cry, in the bitterneſs of their ſouls, to the God of all grace, in order to obtain "the ſalutary truth"; tho' the obtainment of this truth, according to his own way of thinking, is that alone which is connected with life. And yet, he very loudly calls upon them to exert themſelves with all their might in as truly "ſelf-juſtifying labor", by another ſort of doing and repenting, while he knows in his heart, at the ſame time, that neither their doing or repenting, in the ſenſe he would urge them to it, will any more avail to their obtaining life, than if they ſat ſtill and did nothing. That is, in plain words, he peremptorily forbids their making the leaſt attempt towards the obtainment of the only thing which can intereſt them in life; while yet, he would put them upon doing that, the doing of which would be as ſure a path to hell, as "that devout one" of the popular preachers, he ſometimes ſpeaks of. This is the plain engliſh of what he ſays. One can ſcarce think him ſerious. If he is, he very ſeriouſly ſays a great deal to no purpoſe, unleſs to ſet the ſcriptures in a ridiculous light: Eſpecially, is there reaſon to think thus,

ſame time, and in regard of the ſame perſons; to ſuppoſe which would be highly diſhonorary to God. Beſides, tis obſervable, the holy God is bro't in, by this ſame prophet, as declaring, "if the wicked ſhall turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep all his ſtatutes,— he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die. All his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be

thus, as it is not his intention, by turning men to the law, to awaken in them a ſenſe of ſin and guilt, that, ſeeing their danger, they may be in a more prepared frame of mind for the reception of "the ſalutary truth". This kind of "law-work" is, with him, pag. 292. "an idle proceſs". He frankly owns, pag. 293. "that "he ſees no more difference between a careleſs & con- "victed ſinner, than there is betwixt a felon ranging "his round at large, and one newly apprehended by "the officers of juſtice; and thinks it would look liker "an impertinent ſarcaſm than any thing elſe, to tell "either of theſe laſt, that he was now in a very hope- "ful way". What he means is, that the impious, profligate, hardned ſinner, who has all his days lived in rioting and wantoneſs, ſtupidly tho'tleſs of God, and unconcerned about the requirements of religion, is as much in the way of obtaining mercy as the ſinner, who, from a diſtreſſing ſenſe of the periſhing need he ſtands in of help, is rouſed to the utmoſt diligence in "ſeeking God, if perhaps he may be found of him". The "merciful truth", as he thinks, "needs no preparation for its reception".—It "prevents the moſt harden'd rebels"; and they are in as fair a way to become poſſeſſed of it, as any ſinners whatever. But theſe ſentiments ſtand in direct oppoſition both to the letter and ſpirit of numerous inſpired texts, which ſpeak of ſinners as in "a better", or "worſe ſtate", with reſpect to their ſalvation; as being in a "more" or "leſs likely way" to obtain the ſalutary truth: As I ſhall have occaſion, particularly and largely to ſhew, in

be mentioned to him : In his righteouſneſs that he hath done, he ſhall live". But how could one that has been a tranſgreſſor live by his after-righteouſneſs, upon the terms of law ? To ſuppoſe ſuch a thing, even tho' his after-righteouſneſs ſhould be perfect, would be to ſuppoſe, that the law might acquit and condemn the ſame perſon, at the ſame time. For no righteouſneſs, when the law has once been violated, can make any man righteous in the eye of the law. If therefore God ſhould declare he would make it the rule of his conduct towards ſinners, " not to mention in a more proper place hereafter. In the mean time, it may be worth obſerving, what our author has ſaid above naturally and ſtongly tends, whatever his deſign might be, to encourage men in wickedneſs. For he has deny'd all difference between ſinners as to their finding " the ſalutary truth" ; very plainly inſinuating, that it is as likely it ſhould be communicated to them while hardned in iniquity, as when awakened to a deep ſenſe of their guilt and danger ; while impiouſly contemning God and ſneering at religion, as when with the greateſt ſollicitude they are attending the inſtituted means of grace : Nay, it ſhould ſeem, by what he has ſometimes ſuggeſted, as tho' the vileſt debauchees ſtood, even, a better chance for the obtainment of the ſaving truth, than thoſe who take care to eſcape the pollutions that are in the world thro' luſt, and a e ſerious and earneſt in their uſe of the means of ſalvation. He may think this a laudable zeal for the honor of free and ſovereign grace ; but tis, in reality of ſenſe, " turning it into laſciv ouſneſs". I know of no man, who is more heinouſly chargeable with " making Chriſt a miniſter of ſin", by uſing him, and the grace of God thro' him, to encourage ſinners, while " walking in the way of their own heart, and in the ſight of their eyes", to imagine they are in as fair a way to find the ſaving truth, as when they are ſeeking God for it in the beſt manner they are able.

mention their former tranſgreſſions" in caſe of after-perfect obedience to the law, but to grant them life upon the ſcore of this righteouſneſs, it muſt be by the interpoſition of grace: But the ſcripture knows of no ſuch grace; and it would indeed reflect diſhonor on the divine character, as revealed in the new-teſtament, to ſuppoſe the exhibition of it: Yea, it would virtually make void the whole work of Chriſt as Saviour, by introducing a rule of conduct towards the ſinner, by which he might be ſaved, without any relation to him. The plain truth is, ſinners for whom a Saviour has been provided, and a method contrived and revealed conformably to which they are within the poſſibility of obtaining life, can't be ſuppoſed to be under a diſpenſation of meer law, or in ſuch circumſtances as that they "muſt die if they ſin", and can't live but by "their perfect righteouſneſs" in obedience to the law. This would be to ſuppoſe it both poſſible, and impoſſible, for them to be ſaved. It would be to place them under diſpenſations quite oppoſite to, yea, abſolutely ſubverſive of, each other.

Law therefore, whether publiſhed in the days of Moſes, or Ezekiel, or at any other time ſince the lapſe, muſt be conſidered as ſubſervient to the plan of mercy thro' Chriſt, or otherwiſe it will be inconſiſtent with it, and deſtructive of it. And this is the view, in which the apoſtle Paul teaches us to conſider it, as we would entertain right apprehenſions of the intention of God in it: Which brings me

To

To take ſome ſpecial notice of the anſwer he has given to the quſtion, " wherefore ſerveth the law" ? And tis ſumed up in the two following particulars.

THE firſt is contained in thoſe words, * The law " was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions, till the ſeed ſhould come to whom the promiſe was made".—The ſecond is thus expreſſed, † " The law was our ſchool-maſter to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith".

IN the firſt place, the apoſtle, in anſwer to the queſtion, " wherefore ſerveth the law" ? declares, that it " was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions, till the ſeed ſhould come to whom the promiſe was made". As if he had ſaid, the law of Moſes, in its complex view, made up of ceremonial inſtitutions, and moral precepts, was added as an appendix to the abrahamic covenant, " becauſe", or for the ſake, " of tranſgreſſions" ; that is, either to prevent the commiſſion of them, or, if they ſhould be committed, to make them an occaſion of ſpiritual ſervice. And the Jews were to be under this diſpenſation, " till the ſeed ſhould come", till the appearance of the Meſſiah, " the promiſed ſeed" of Abraham, to erect another and better diſpenſation in its room. This I take to be the ſenſe of the apoſtle in theſe words. He means, by the law, both the " law-ritual", and the " law-moral", and would be underſtood as affirming concerning the law, in both theſe ſenſes, that it was introduced among the Jews, as the diſpenſation they ſhould be under till the times of Chriſt, " the promiſed ſeed", BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS. Accordingly let it be ſaid,

THE

* Gal. 3. 19. † Ver. 24.

THE "law-ritual" or ceremonial was introduced among the Jews "becauſe of tranſgreſſions"; that is, to ſecure them from thoſe ſuperſtitions and idolatries, then every where prevalent in the world, which were ſubverſive of true piety, and an inlet to all manner of vice and wickedneſs. Some think, that the ceremonies of the Jewiſh law were added becauſe of their tranſgreſſion in making and worſhipping the "Golden-calf", and that God would not have enjoined on them theſe burdenſome rites had it not been for this folly of their's. But tho' it was after their ſin, in this ſpecial inſtance, that the Moſaic rites were inſtituted; yet it does not appear, that they would not have been inſtituted had they not thus ſinned. Tis far more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the wiſdom of God ſaw the fitneſs of ſuch a diſpenſation to anſwer his own purpoſes,& that it was, particularly, a well adapted means to keep that people from tranſgreſſion, by reſtraining thoſe rites to the one true God, which they would otherwiſe have been in danger of converting to the worſhip of gods, falſely ſo called, after the manner of the idolatrous nations. The law of ceremonies was therefore given them "becauſe of tranſgreſſions", that is, to preſerve them from committing thoſe tranſgreſſions which had corrupted the whole earth. A more ſimple way of worſhip might, in an abſolute view, have been more perfect; but, conſidering the then ſtate of the world, and of the Jewiſh people, ritual inſtitutions might be better for them, and a more likely means to reſtrain them within their duty, and preſerve them from thoſe ways of falſe worſhip which were then in univer-

ſal

ſal practice.* Very obſervable to our purpoſe are thoſe words of *Maimonides*,† which are a juſt comment on the apoſtle Paul, tho' wrote long before his birth into the world, or the coming of Jeſus Chriſt. Says that moſt learned and judicious Hebrew Doctor (as the excellent Mr. Lowman ſtiles him), "When God ſent Moſes to redeem "his people out of Egypt, it was the uſual cuſtom "of the world, and the worſhip in which all nati- "ons were bred up, to build temples in honor "of the ſun, moon and ſtars, and to offer diverſe "kinds of animals to them, and to have prieſts "appointed for that end: Wherefore, God know- "ing, that it was beyond human nature at once "to quit that, which it hath long been accuſtom- "ed and powerfully inclined to, would not com- "mand that all that worſhip ſhould be aboliſh- "ed,— but that HE ONLY ſhould be the OBJECT "of it, that theſe temples and altars ſhould be

"built

* What tho' the ceremonies of the Jewiſh law were numerous? Perhaps it will be found, the more cloſely the matter is examined into, that they were, for this very reaſon, ſo much the better fitted to correct the proneneſs in that people to the idolatrous ſuperſtitions of the heathen, at leaſt to guard them againſt being carried away with their abominations: Eſpecially, if it be conſidered, that the "ceremonial rites", which they had appointed them, were ſuch as had a ſpecial aſpect on the idolatrous rites of the Pagan nations, and were purpoſely fitted to prevent their being ſeduced by them. This has been ſhewn, by learned men, to have been the caſe with reſpect to many of them; and it would doubtleſs appear to be the truth with reſpect to them all, were we ſufficiently acquainted with the ſtate of things in that diſtant age of the world.

† They are quoted by Dr. Whitby, note on Gal. 3. 19.

" built to HIM ALONE, theſe ſacrifices offered to " HIM ALONE, and theſe prieſts be conſecrated to " HIS SERVICE ONLY". Thus he. And the wiſdom of God, in theſe "ritual inſtitutions", will ſhine ſtill brighter, if it ſhould appear (as it very evidently will by and by) that they were ſo contrived, as to be a proper "ſchool-maſter to bring the Jews to Chriſt", at the ſame time that they guarded them againſt the idolatrous tranſgreſſions that then defiled the earth. I go on to ſay,

THE law, conſidered as " moral", was given the Jews " becauſe of tranſgreſſions". And in the following ſenſes.

" IT was added becauſe of trangreſſions"; that is, becauſe, by tranſgreſſions of the law of reaſon, perſiſted in from generation to generation, mankind had obſcured the light of their underſtanding, and diſabled themſelves from diſcerning in many inſtances, at leaſt, with clearneſs and certainty, the difference between virtue and vice. To prevent therefore the intire loſs of all ſenſe of moral good and evil in the earth, God was pleaſed to publiſh the law-moral to the Jewiſh nation, containing a rule of duty, ſimple and pure, clear and full, and, in a word, admirably fitted to direct their conduct both towards God and man.

" IT was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions"; that is, that the Jews in ſpecial, and other nations thro' them, might be better able, having a promulgated law, containing a clear and certain rule of duty, to know wherein they were chargeable with

tranſgreſſion,

tranſgreſſion. Hence thoſe words of the apoſtle Paul, * " by the law is the knowledge of ſin" ; that is, a more clear and certain knowledge of it, and, in ſome inſtances, a knowledge of it, when, had it not been for the revealed law, men would have been in total ignorance in this reſpect. To this purpoſe we read, † " I had notknown ſin but by the law", that is, I had not known it at all in ſome caſes, and in none ſo clearly and fully, had it not been for the revealed law.

" It was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions", that is, that their malignant deſtructive nature and operation, as tranſgreſſions, might be more readily & fully apprehended. Hence that language of the apoſtle, ‡ " when the commandment came, I died". So in the words that next follow, " the commandment I found to be unto death". And yet again, § " ſin taking occaſion from the commandment, ſlew me".

In fine, " it was added becauſe of tranſgreſſions", that is, that the Jews, diſcerning more thorowly from the law, the criminous nature, and awful demerit, of their tranſgreſſions, might be led into an affecting, convincing, conſtraining apprehenſion of the deſireableneſs, greatneſs, and glory of divine grace in their pardon and ſalvation. Hence the apoſtle Paul, after he had ſaid, ** " the law entered that ſin might abound", immediately obſerves, in the following words, " but where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound" As if he had ſaid, by how much more ſin, in its evil nature, & deſtructive tendency, is made to abound by the introduction of the law,

 by

* Rom. 3. 20. † Rom. 7. 7. ‡ Rom. 7. 9.
§ Ver. 11. ** Rom. 5. 20.

by ſo much the more is grace rendered conſpicuous and glorious in delivering from it. For ſo it follows, * " that as ſin hath reigned unto death, (that is, thro' the law, that being the ſtrength of ſin, 1 Cor. 15. 5, 6.) even ſo might grace reign thro' righteouſneſs unto eternal life by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord". Tis certain, a clear and full view of the malignity and guilt of ſin, as it is made to abound by the promulgated law of God, is powerfully adapted to ſet off the riches of the glory of divine grace. And one of the chief things intended by God, in giving the law to the Jews was, that they might, in this way, be bro't to entertain in their minds exalted tho'ts of his grace, and be engaged to place all their dependance on it in the buiſineſs of ſalvation. And it was happily ſuited to ſuch a purpoſe. They might, from the law, be eaſily led to ſee, in a ſtrong and full light, their need of the mercy of God, the ſupreme law-giver and king; and that they could be ſaved in no way but that of grace, and the abounding of it towards them. Tis true, they did not generally make this uſe of the law; but the fault lay with themſelves, and not the divine law. This was very powerfully ſuited to give them ſuch a ſenſe of ſin and wrath as to put them upon flying to grace, as to that only which could give them hope of an acquitance before God, and coming to the enjoyment of him in a better ſtate and world.

THE other reaſon, the apoſtle gives for the introduction of the law, among the Jews, is, † " that it might be their ſchool-maſter to bring them to Chriſt, that they might be juſtified by faith". What

* Ver. 21. † Gal. 3. 24.

What he means is, that the law ſtood connected, in the ſcheme of God, with the promiſed Meſſiah; and was a preparatory diſpenſation for the more perfect ſtate of things under the goſpel-œconomy; as childhood is introductory to the more mature ſtate of manhood, and a previous ſeaſon ſuitably making way for it by tuition and diſcipline. The apoſtle explains himſelf, upon this point, in the beginning of the next chapter, where he conſiders the Jews as "children under age", in compariſon with chriſtians under the goſpel; and "the law", as their "tutor and governor till the time appointed of the father", that is, the more perfect ſtate this was introductory to, in the times of Chriſt. And tis true of the "law", whether we conſider it in regard of its "ceremonial inſtitutions", or "moral precepts", that it was deſigned by God as a kind of "ſchool-maſter to lead the Jews to Chriſt".

THE "law ceremonial" was introduced among them with this view; that is, it was a lower kind of ſtate (like childhood in compare with manhood) appointed by God for their tuition & inſtruction, or to prepare them for, and ſuitably inroduce them to, the more perfect ſtate of things, which was to take place by the erection of the goſpel-diſpenſation. This ſeems to be the meaning of the apoſtle. The like account is given of this matter elſewhere, in the new-teſtament-writings. Says this ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking of the Moſaic ceremonial inſtitutions, * "which are a ſhadow of good things to come, but the body is Chriſt"; that is, their ſubſtance or reality is to be found in him. In like

 manner,

* Col. 2. 17.

manner, the law of rites is characteriſed, in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, * as "having a ſhadow of good things to come". It is indeed the main deſign of the writer of this epiſtle, to point out the analogy there is between the leſs perfect ſtate of things under the law, & the more perfect one under the goſpel, & to lead us, at the ſame time, into the tho't, that the former of theſe ſtates was, in the intention of God, emblematical of the latter, and preparatory to it. According to his ſenſe of the matter, the temple, the holy of holies, the prieſthood, the ſacrifices, and, in a word, the whole jewiſh ritual, were types or figures of ſome future anſwerable good things, deſigned for the inſtruction of the Iſraelites, tho' in a lower degree, till the good things themſelves, which they repreſented, ſhould take place in the times of Chriſt. It will, perhaps, be found impoſſible to make a great part of this epiſtle intelligible, upon any ſcheme of interpretation but that, which conſiders the jewiſh ceremonial as a pattern, type, or emblematical repreſentation of that ſtate of things, which was to be eſtabliſhed in the Goſpel-day.

I AM not inſenſible, "the doctrine of types" has been abuſed by ſome, and objected to, by others, as unworthy of regard.

IT has been abuſed by ſome, who have unhappily indulged to vain imaginations upon this ſubject; giving out their own fancies for the meaning of God's law. This has been too often done, not only by jewiſh writers in the times of the law; but by chriſtian writers, ſince its aboliſhment.

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* Heb. 10. 1.

The enemies of revelation have taken occaſion herefrom to treat the things of God and religion with ſneer and ridicule. But the doctrine of types ought not to be tho't the worſe of upon this account. It may be the doctrine of ſcripture, tho' men of ſtrong imaginations, and weak judgments, may have pointed out an analogy between the law and the goſpel, which never had exiſtence but in their own fancies; and tho' deſigning men may herefrom have taken occaſion to ſpeak of ſuch analogies with contempt. Both our Saviour himſelf, & his apoſtles, do certainly conſider many things under the jewiſh law, as prefigurations, ſhadows, emblematical patterns of anſwerable better things under the goſpel-diſpenſation. There can be no reaſonable diſpute as to this. And if we take them for our guides, inſtead of giving an unreſtrained ſcope to imagination, there will be no danger of expoſing religion by a meer fanciful application of the things contained in the writings of Moſes and the Prophets.

This doctrine has alſo been objected to, as not worthy of regard; but upon reaſons that are not convincing.

It is ſaid, the things that are called ancient types and figures cannot be applied to any after-events, with ſufficient certainty and preciſion. I anſwer, tho' the application be not preciſe and certain in all inſtances; yet it is in ſo many as to exclude chance, and put us upon having recourſe to deſign. And herein, it is obſervable, there is an analogy between natural and revealed religion. We prove the divine wiſdom and goodneſs from

the harmonies and fitneſſes we ſee in the works of nature; and we are ſatisfied with the evidence ariſing from hence, tho' theſe harmonies and fitneſſes have never yet been certainly and preciſely made out in all inſtances. In ſome, far from being made particularly & diſtinctly to appear, they are attended with difficulty; yea, with ſeeming incongruity. And yet, we think it reaſonable to argue from them, they are ſo many, and ſo clearly point out deſign, notwithſtanding the obſcurity in particular inſtances. And the ſame may be ſaid, with equal reaſon, in the caſe before us. The analogy between ancient things under the law, and anſwerable events under the goſpel, is, in ſo many inſtances, capable of being made out with ſuch preciſion & certainty, as to exclude all probability of chance, and to render it highly reaſonable to admit deſign. That we may perceive this in a clear point of light, let us try to apply the ſcripture types and prefigurations, as we call them, to other perſons and events, than thoſe they are applied to in the new-teſtament. If deſign be excluded,* "theſe ought to be equally, or "nearly ſo, applicable to other perſons & events; "which yet, I think, no ſerious, conſiderate per-"ſon can affirm. Now, if chance be once ex-"cluded, and the neceſſity of having recourſe to "deſign be admitted, we ſhall inſtantly be com-"peled to acknowledge a contrivance greater "than human, from the long diſtance of time in-"tervening between the type, and the thing ty-"pified, with other ſuch-like reaſons".

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* Dr. Hartley, on man; whoſe tho'ts on the Moſaic types, are well worth reading.

It is ſaid again, the things which we call types had their "literal meaning", and "literal uſe", in ancient times; and tis unreaſonable to aſſign to them a "double meaning and uſe". The reply is, if there really is an analogy between "jewiſh rites" and "goſpel-events", greater than can be ſuppoſed to reſult from chance, or human foreſight, and ſuch as obliges us to have recourſe to God; and this can be evidently made out in a good number of inſtances: Our being able to ſhew, that theſe inſtituted rites had their "literal meaning and uſe", in former days, will be ſo far from deſtroying their nature as types or prefigurations, that it will rather argue the neceſſity of a "double ſenſe and uſe" of theſe things, and that it was in the actual view and deſign of God in the inſtitution of them. "All the works of God— "(as Dr. Hartley expreſſes it) have various uſes "and ſubſerviencies in reſpect of each other; and, "if the ſcriptures are the word of God, analogy "would lead one to expect ſomething correſponding hereto in them".

In fine, it is ſtill objected, how was the law, when it refer'd to Chriſt, by the acknowledgment of all, only in a typical, figurative, emblematical way, a ſuitable "ſchool-maſter", or tutor, to lead the Jews into a true knowledge of him, or the goſpel-diſpenſation that was to be erected by him? Did they underſtand the meaning of their "ritual inſtitutions", conſidered in their typical reference? Did they uſe them with this reference? Did they look beyond them to the things ſaid to be repreſented, or prefigured, by them? In anſwer whereto, I will not affirm, that the Jews

Jews had, or that it was intended by God that they ſhould have, a clear and full underſtanding of the things ſhadowed forth, in their law, by types and emblematical figures. The ſuppoſition of ſuch knowledge is inconſiſtent with that "mode of inſtruction" they were under. As a late excellent writer well obſerves, * "What was pre-"figured of the times of the Meſſiah, either in "the ancient prophets, or types of the "jewiſh "ritual", was, in the apoſtle Peter's juſt account "of it,† "as a light that ſhineth in a dark place, "until the day dawn, and the day-ſtar ariſe in "your hearts". Yet, dark as it was, it gave ſome "light, and ſuch as was of great advantage to "the principal ends deſigned by it, and for which "a fuller light was not neceſſary. It will be lit-"tle to our purpoſe to inquire, how far the Hebrew "nation in general did actually underſtand "their own ritual, and what it taught concerning "the Meſſiah, his perſon, character and offices. "It is more to the purpoſe to conſider, how it "might have been underſtood, if they had right-"ly applied themſelves to the underſtanding of "it". And tho' we cannot ſay, particularly, how far their knowledge might have extended; yet we may ſay, in general, that they might have made conſiderable diſcoveries of the more ſecret meaning, at leaſt, of their more important rites. As the laſt quoted author obſerves, "The myſteries "of Hieroglyphicks, and inſtruction by ſymbols, "in uſe among their neighbours, became a part "of ſtudy and ſcience; and they learned many "things by them, not obvious to common ob-"ſervation.

* Lowman, in his jewiſh ritual.

† 2 Pet. 1. 19.

" ſervation. The moral meaning of ſacrifices,
" for inſtance, was of eaſy underſtanding. Why
" might not the Hebrews, from a general under-
" ſtanding of that part of their ritual, be taught to
" expect a greater high-prieſt, better ſacrifices, a
" better covenant, better promiſes and bleſſings,
" in the times of the Meſſiah, who was to perfect
" all things wanting in their law? Eſpecially,
" when their own ritual ſhewed its own weakneſs,
" that it could not take away ſin".

But of however ſmall uſe, the " law ceremonial", in its typical ſenſe, might be to the Jews BEFORE, it was highly ſerviceable AT THE TIME OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH, to prepare their minds both for a more ready underſtanding of, and complying with, the method of ſalvation thro' him.

It was of great uſe, as a " ſchool-maſter", to lead them more eaſily into right conceptions of " the things pertaining to the kingdom of Chriſt". For, as it was a diſpenſation, which really, tho' in figures and ſhadows only, repreſented the work and office of the Meſſiah, and that ſalvation with which he was to " bleſs all nations of the earth", it could not but prepare their minds, unleſs they were ſtupidly inattentive, the more readily to take in juſt notions of theſe things, after his incarnation, death, reſurrection, and exaltation to heaven. However obſcure their " ritual" might be, in former days, as to its typical meaning, it was now opened and explained; inſomuch, that if they underſtood it formerly in no other than its " literal uſe and meaning", they would be *now* under advantage

vantage to underſtand the things that were figuratively ſignified by it. The plain truth is, "law" and "goſpel" mutually illuſtrate each other. "By the goſpel it might be ſeen, that the law had a typical reference; and by the law, the mind was prepared more readily & juſtly to conceive of the goſpel." The Jews, for inſtance, by having long ſeen and known the "literal" uſe and meaning of the "legal ſacrifices", might more eaſily have underſtood, by parity of reaſon, the nature, deſign and efficacy, of the "one ſacrifice", which Chriſt 'offer'd of himſelf to God", to "make reconciliation for iniquity"; arguing with themſelves,* "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctified to the purifying of the fleſh; how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who offered himſelf to God without ſpot, purge your conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God"? In like manner, by their ſeeing and knowing, that "the high-prieſt, once every year, entered into the holieſt of all, not without blood, both for himſelf and for the people", their minds were aſſiſted to underſtand more eaſily and clearly the things hereby meant, namely, "Chriſt's appearance for us in heaven", in virtue of "his blood ſhed for us" on the earth. And the ſame may be ſaid of their "whole ritual", as it was a ſhadow of better things under the diſpenſation of the Meſſias.

It was alſo of very important uſe to "facilitate" and "ſtrengthen" their faith in Chriſt, and the goſpel-revelation; eſpecially taken in connection with the predictions of their prophets. For

* Heb. 9. 13, 14.

For theſe, and the accompliſhment of them in Chriſt, did ſo correſpond to each other (as in water face anſwereth to face) that thoſe, who believed the law and the prophets, were under great advantage, by means hereof, to believe in Chriſt alſo. Tis therefore obſervable, our bleſſed Lord, when he would ſatisfie his diſciples, that he was indeed the Chriſt, and that his death, which had occaſioned, at firſt, ſome ſtaggering in their faith, was a matter of neceſſity, "he expounded to them, in all the ſcriptures, the things concerning himſelf, beginning at Moſes, and proceding to all the prophets". * In like manner, when the apoſtle Paul labored to convince the Jews, at Rome, of the truth of chriſtianity, the method he took, eſteeming it the moſt effectual, was that, † "he appointed a day, and many came to his lodging, to whom he expounded and teſtified the kingdom of God, perſwading them concerning Jeſus, both out of the law of Moſes, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening". And it may be worthy of ſpecial remark, our Saviour himſelf aſcribed it to "the want of faith in Moſes", that the Jews did not "believe in him". Says he, ‡ "had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me: But if ye believe not his writings, how ſhall ye believe my words"? To the like purpoſe is that paſſage, in a diſcourſe of the apoſtle Paul's, recorded in the book of the Acts, § "they that dwell at Jeruſalem, and their rulers, becauſe they knew him not, nor yet the voice of the prophets which are read to them every ſabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him".

NOR

* Luk. 24. 27. † Act. 28. 23. ‡ Joh. 5. 46, 47.
§ Act. 13. 27.

NOR was the "law ceremonial", taken in connection with the prophetic parts of the old-teſtament, of uſe to the Jews in our Saviour's day only, to beget & ſtrengthen in them a belief of chriſtianity, but to Gentiles alſo; yea, it was then, and has ever ſince been, and always will be, ſingularly uſeful, in this reſpect, both to Jews and Gentiles, tho' in a different way to the one and the other. "The Jews believed in Chriſt, becauſe prefigured by Moſes, and propheſied of by the prophets; the Gentiles believed theſe prefigurations and propheſies, becauſe ſo exactly and wonderfully accompliſhed in the appearance of Chriſt, and the offices he ſuſtained and executed as the promiſed Saviour". And the plain truth is, the the more than human correſpondence between the types and propheſies of the old-teſtament, and the ſtate of things erected by the coming of Chriſt in theſe goſpel-times, is a ſtanding public reproach to the jewiſh people for their infidelity, and a ſtanding public juſtification of the reaſonableneſs of their faith, who embrace chriſtianity. We may, even at this diſtance from Chriſt, and much greater diſtance from Moſes, vindicate our reception of Chriſt and his goſpel, from the verification of ſo many ancient types and figures, as well as propheſies, in his perſon, office, and the ſpiritual kingdom he has ſet up in the world. For tis impoſſible, ſo many incidents in the jewiſh diſpenſation, ſo many inſtituted rites, ſo many propheſies, ſhould bear ſuch a correſpondence with the character, work, and kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, without having recourſe to deſign; and no deſign but that of God could take in a compaſs of time, extending thro' ages and generations, from

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the times of Moſes to the times of Chriſt: Yea, I may ſay, from the days of Adam to the end of the world. For it is evidently one uniform deſign that has been in proſecution from the beginning of the world, and will be proſecuted till time ſhall be no more.

THE "law-moral" was, in like manner, "a ſchool-maſter to bring the Jews to Chriſt". And, with great propriety, tis thus ſpoken of, as, by its prohibitions and threatnings, it was adapted to lead them into ſuch a knowledge of ſin, as had a powerful tendency to diſpoſe and influence them to repair to "the mercy of the promiſe", and not to depend upon a claim to life founded on their own doings in conformity to law, ſimply as ſuch. It was well fitted, in this ſenſe, to tutor and diſcipline their minds. They could not, if they were faithful and impartial in comparing their hearts and lives with the demands of the law, but be conſcious to themſelves of many omiſſions of duty and commiſſions of ſin; and when, with like faithfulneſs, they attended to the denunciations of God againſt ſin in every kind, they could not but be bro't to look upon themſelves as ſtanding in abſolute need of mercy, and under abſolute obligations to fly to it by "faith", as ever they would entertain the leaſt hope of "juſtification" in the ſight of that God, whoſe law they had thus violated. It was "by the commandment", as written in the divine law, "that ſin became exceeding ſinful" to the apoſtle Paul.* And it was by this ſight and apprehenſion of ſin, thro' the law, that the law became an *inſtructor*, *tutor*,

* Rom. 7. 13.

tutor, or *ſchool-maſter* to him ; teaching him not to depend on works in conformity to law, but to place his hope on the mercy of God thro' Jeſus the redeemer. And the "law-moral" was given by God, to the Jews, that it might, in this way, be of ſpiritual ſervice to them. He intended it ſhould be, as it were, "a ſchool-maſter" to ſhew them their deſerts by reaſon of ſin, and in this way to diſengage them from truſting in their own doings for life, and put them upon repairing to "the promiſe" thro' the "ſeed of Abraham". And it probably had this good effect upon multitudes of the Jews, in their ſucceſſive generations, from the days of Moſes, till the coming of Chriſt, the promiſed ſeed.

And now, from what has been diſcourſed, we are naturally and obviouſly led to entertain in our minds honorable tho'ts of the jewiſh law, in regard of its "ceremonial rites", as well as "moral precepts",

We may, perhaps, have been ready to think contemptuouſly of the jewiſh conſtitution, on account of thoſe "numerous rites" with which their worſhip was encumbered. And, poſſibly, what the ſacred writers of the new-teſtament have ſometimes ſaid, with reference to theſe "ceremonial obſervancies", may have led us into ſuch tho'ts about them. But it ought always to be remembered, that theſe "rites", however numerous, or burthenſome, were appointed by the wiſdom and authority of God ; who never would have appointed them, if it had not been reaſonable, and, for the beſt, all things conſidered, that

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the Jews ſhould be placed under ſuch a religious conſtitution. We may therefore be ſure, the inſpired writers of the new-teſtament do never ſpeak contemptuouſly of theſe "rites", or of the "jewiſh diſpenſation," on account of them, but in a *comparative view*; that is, ſetting them in competition with the better ſtate of things under the goſpel. In compare with the goſpel-inſtitution, ſince the coming of Chriſt, the jewiſh conſtitution was "weak, and beggerly, imperfect and unprofitable". And tis in this comparative ſenſe, that it is thus ſpoken of in the new-teſtament-writings. It would be a diſhonor to God, and a bare-fac'd reflection on his governing wiſdom, to ſpeak, in a contemptuous manner, of it in any other ſenſe. For tho' it was not ſo perfect an inſtitution, as that which has been erected by Jeſus Chriſt, in the goſpel-day; yet, it was ſuch an one as the wiſdom of God tho't beſt for that age of the world, and the circumſtances of the jewiſh nation. And, perhaps, it was as good and perfect an inſtitution of religion as could have been contrived and erected, for that people, in that day. It was, as we have ſeen, well fitted to guard them againſt that "idolatrous worſhip", which had corrupted the whole earth. And ſo far as it was a ſuitable means to anſwer ſo good an end, there can be no reaſonable room to complain, either of the wiſdom or goodneſs of God, tho' their ritual obſervances were many and burthenſome; eſpecially if it be remembered, that he had it in view, by theſe Moſaic ceremonies, to put them under tuition, that they might be prepared for higher expectations, than they could reaſonably have from the law, ſimply in itſelf. If when we have read the

ſcripture-account of the numerous rites of the jewiſh law, we have confined our view to their meer "literal uſe and meaning", no wonder we have been diſpos'd to entertain an unbecoming notion of the diſpenſation they were placed under; imagining it ſcarce worthy of ſo great and glorious an author, as the one true and living God. But our view has been too narrow and confin'd. The all-wiſe God appointed the uſe of theſe "ceremonial rites", as prefigurations, emblematical deſcriptions, of that only way to life, which has been clearly and fully opened, ſince the coming of Jeſus Chriſt. And the jews, by means of thoſe "ritual inſtitutions", as truly enjoy'd the GOSPEL in their day, as we do now; tho' more darkly and obſcurely. Their ſacrifices, their prieſts, their temple, their whole manner of worſhip, were the goſpel in type and figure. And conſidering their circumſtances, together with the way in which it was determined Chriſt ſhould come into the world, and accompliſh the work of man's redemption, this lower and more imperfect method of inſtruction might be beſt ſuited to anſwer the purpoſes of God, and the good ends he had in proſecution. It might not be proper, they ſhould know too much of the goſpel-plan; and this method of inſtruction, by types and figures, might be well adapted to let them into all the knowledge, it might be neceſſary or proper they ſhould then attain to. And the more prouſly conſiderate, among the Jews, might know more of the "typical ſenſe" of the law, than we may be ready to imagine. I don't ſay, or think, that their knowledge, with reſpect to Chriſt and the goſpel, was any way to compare with our's, whoſe

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lot it is to live ſince the revelation God has made of himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles; but they might know a great deal in general, and ſo much as to be diſpoſed and prepared to look beyond the "literal meaning" of the ceremonial rites appointed by their law. Moſes himſelf, the jewiſh legiſlator, under God, "by faith" looked beyond the law to Chriſt, and beyond Canaan to heaven; and it was owing to this faith of his, that he was enabled to ſurmount the difficulties he was called to meet with, "enduring affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoying the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon", * as we read in the epiſtle to the Hebrews; where we are preſented with a long liſt of jewiſh worthies, after the eſtabliſhment of the Moſaic ritual, who, "by faith" looked beyond the "literal uſe of their law", and were influenced herefrom to behave ſo as to honor God, and be "accounted worthy of a better reſurrection", of the better things of the coming world. And the "ceremonial inſtitutions" were all along, during the continuance of the Moſaic dipenſation, as a "ſchool-maſter" to the Jews; and the more ſerious and inquiſitive among them were taught to expect ſome higher and better ſtate of things; tho' they might not particularly know what it was, or how it would be accompliſhed. And the Jews, who lived when Chriſt made his appearance in the world, could ſcarce have had a better "ſchool-maſter to bring them to him, that they might be juſtified by faith", than the types and figures of the law. They might have ſeen their ritual, in its moſt important articles, accompliſht in Jeſus Chriſt; and it was owing to

* Heb. 11. 25.

ſtrange blindneſs and perverſeneſs, that they ſo generally rejected the evidence, herefrom ariſing, that Jeſus was the promiſed and prefigured Meſſiah. Let us view the ceremonies of the jewiſh law, in their typical reference, as well as literal uſe; and while we conſider them, as deſigned by God to be "a ſchool-maſter" to them, to teach them to depend on Chriſt, inſtead of their law, for ſalvation, let us admire his wiſdom, rather than find fault with his conduct; being in readineſs to break out in the language of the apoſtle Paul, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out"! *

And let us alſo entertain in our minds becoming thoughts of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in the "moral precepts", whch he was pleaſed to give to the jewiſh people. Theſe were certainly adapted to very valuable purpoſes. It was, perhaps, greatly owing to this ſummary rule of duty, that other nations, beſides the jewiſh, became acquainted with the nature of virtue and vice in ſo many inſtances, & were not loſt to all ſenſe of the diſtinction between moral good and evil. The various nations of the world might be more indebted to the law, which God gave to the Jews, by the hands of Moſes, than we may be ready to imagine. What we are apt to aſcribe to the ſegacity and ſtrength of meer natural reaſon, may, poſſibly, with greater juſtice, be attributed to the knowledge which learned men might have, in one way or another, of this Moſaic delineation of the law of reaſon.

To

* Rom. 11. 33.

To beſure, we, whoſe lot it is to live ſince the coming of Chriſt, and the explanation of the "Moſaic moral precepts,", by him and his apoſtles, and their adoption into the chriſtian ſcheme, may reap all the advantages, it was propoſed the Jews ſhould reap by them; and in a much higher degree. The "law moral" is not turned out as a "ſchool-maſter", but ſtill ſuſtains this office, tho' Chriſt is come. Nay, ſo far is the "moral law" from being uſeleſs, as a "ſchool-maſter", under the goſpel-diſpenſation, "to lead men to Chriſt, that they may be juſtified by faith", that it is of ſtronger influence to this purpoſe, than it was before he came into the world "for the redemption of tranſgreſſors". For "this law", under the goſpel-diſpenſation,and as introduced into it,more fully commands duty,and prohibits ſin; and does both under the ſanction of death, beyond the grave, more clearly and certainly revealed, in caſe of ſin. It is therefore more powerfully fitted to convince of ſin and guilt, and ſhew men that they muſt die in their ſins, unleſs they repair, by faith to grace and goſpel, that they may be pardoned and ſaved. For chriſtians can no more be juſtified by law, than the Jews could of old. A ſerious truth this! And we ſhould all lay it to heart; making uſe of the law, even under the diſpenſations of the goſpel, to diſcover ſin, and learn our danger,that we may from hence be awakened to flee from law to grace; depending onChriſt, and not upon law, for juſtification in God's ſight.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Nature of Faith, as juſtifying, particularly aſcertained.

GALATIANS II. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt".

TWO ways of juſtification are here pointed out. One, "by the works of the law"; the other, "by the faith of Chriſt". The former is declared, not to be the goſpel-way of juſtification; and we have, in a former diſcourſe, proved it to be impoſſible, that ſinners, as mankind all are, ſhould be juſtified "by their works". The latter way of juſtification, here ſpoken of, is "by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt". And the apoſtle Paul accordingly ſays, with reſpect both to himſelf, and the Galatians to whom he writes, that they

they "had believed in Jeſus Chriſt"; and to this end, that they "might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt". What therefore I have more eſpecially in view, from this text, at this time, is to point out to you, in as plain and eaſy a manner as I am able, the meaning of faith, as connected with juſtification.

In order whereto, I ſhall neither trouble myſelf, nor you, with thoſe diſcriptions of this faith, which are to be ſeen in books wrote upon the ſubject. They are almoſt as numerous as the books that contain them. And, if one were to judge, from the differing accounts they give of this firſt and great principle of chriſtianity, he would readily be led to imagine, it was as perplext a point as any in religion. Whereas, if we conſult the bible only, and take our idea of faith from this ſacred book, we ſhall meet with no difficulty. The preciſe meaning of this word, as uſed in the new-teſtament, and connected with juſtification, is eaſy to be underſtood; as indeed it might reaſonably be expected it ſhould, faith being a matter not only of eſſential, but univerſal concern.

Faith and knowledge, both agreeing in the aſſent of the mind to apprehended truth, are ſometimes, leſs acurately ſpeaking, uſed for one and the ſame thing: Whereas, they really differ. The aſſent of the mind, in faith, is gained one way; in knowledge, another. Faith is the mind's aſſent upon teſtimony; and upon the teſtimony of God, if the faith is chriſtian. And tis this that diſtinguiſhes faith from knowledge, which is an aſſent

grounded

grounded on the perception of the bodily ſenſes, or the operation of our reaſonable powers. External objects ſtrike our ſenſes, and we at once know what impreſſions we receive from them. And we have an ability of mind to reaſon upon things, comparing them together, deducing conſequences from them, forming a judgment how far this or that is true or falſe, and giving or withholding our aſſent accordingly. In this ſenſe, there are many things, which, tho' inviſible, literally ſpeaking, may yet, in the language of the apoſtle Paul, * be ſaid to be "clearly ſeen, being underſtood". We know them to be truths by our reaſonings, without information from others. But the faith we are treating of is not of this ſort. It "comes by hearing", as the ſcripture-expreſſion is. It is the aſſent of our minds to what has been teſtified to. The ground of this aſſent is not like that of knowledge, but herein differs from it, that tis bottom'd on "the witneſs of God". His word, and that only, in the final reſult, is the proper adequate ground of our faith.

ACCORDINGLY, two things are to be conſidered in the faith that is connected with juſtification, "the object about which it is converſant", and "the perſuaſion or aſſent of the mind with reference to this object.

As to the "object" of faith;—this is the report of the goſpel, or, in other words, "the truth", as revealed by Chriſt and his apoſtles. Hence that affirmation of our Lord, "he that believeth", that is, "the goſpel", he had commiſſioned his apoſtles

* Rom. 1. 20.

apoſtles to preach, "ſhall be ſaved". * Hence alſo that paſſage in one of Paul's epiſtles to the Theſſalonians, where ſpeaking of their being "choſen to ſalvation", he immediately ſubjoins, "thro' belief of the truth", the truth "as it is in Jeſus", the truth as contained in the apoſtolic writings. †

THE object of faith is often ſummarily expreſſed in ſome capital article only; ſometimes one, ſometimes another.

SOMETIMES the comprehenſive object of faith is "God". So we read of Abraham, tha he "believed God, and his faith was counted to him for righteouſneſs". ‡ And our Saviour affirms with a double vehemence, "verily, verily, he that believeth on him that ſent me hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation". § In like manner, the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of thoſe who were "juſtified by grace, that they ſhould be heirs according to the hope of eternal life", deſcribes them in that language, "they which have believed in God". ¶

SOMETIMES "Chriſt" is the ſpecified object of faith. Hence that apoſtolic direction to the trembling jailor, "believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved". ‖ Conſonant whereto are thoſe words in my text, "Knowing that a man is juſtified by the faith of JeſusChriſt, even we have believed in JeſusChriſt". Accordingly, the ſum of Paul's preaching atEpheſus,

* Mark 16. 16. † 2 Theſ. 2. 13. ‡ Gal. 3. 6.
§ Joh. 5. 24. ¶ Tit. 3. 7, 8. ‖ Acts 16. 31.

ſus, in which he had " kept nothing back that was profitable to them", is expreſſed in thoſe words, " teſtifying both to the Jews, and alſo to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt".*

SOMETIMES Chriſt viewed as the " Meſſiah", pointed out by Moſes and the prophets, in the writings of the old-teſtament, is the object of faith. Hence that profeſſion of Martha, " I believe that thou art Chriſt that ſhould come into the world". † Agreeable whereto is that noble confeſſion of Simon Peter, in the name of the apoſtles, " we believe and are ſure that thou art that Chriſt", ‡

SOMETIMES Chriſt conſidered as the " Son of God" is the object of faith. Hence the grand diſcriminating characteriſtic of one that is " born of God, and overcometh the world" is that, " he believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God". ‖ And tis univerſally affirmed of every one " that ſhall confeſs that Jeſus is the ſon of God", that " God dwelleth in him, and he in God". ¶ And, as our Lord himſelf ſays, " God gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life". *‡ And John baptiſt declares, " he that believeth on the ſon hath everlaſting life". †§

SOMETIMES Chriſt, as "dying and ſhedding his blood", is the object of faith. Hence the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of Chriſt, and redemption thro' him,

* Acts 20. 21. † Joh. 11. 27. ‡ Joh. 6. 69.
‖ 1 Joh. 5. 5. ¶ 1 Joh. 4. 15. *‡ Joh. 3. 16.
†§ Ver. 36.

him, ſays, "whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood", that blood of his which is the great atonement, and was ſhed for the remiſſion of ſins.* And one ſpecial article, this ſame apoſtle had preached to the Corinthians, as that by which they ſhould be ſaved, and which he would have them keep in memory unleſs they would believe in vain, was, "that Chriſt died for our ſins according to the ſcriptures". †

SOMETIMES, in fine, Chriſt, as "riſen from the dead", is the object of faith; as in that obſervable paſſage in Paul's epiſtle to the Romans "if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in him that God hath raiſed from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved". ‡ And well might this be reckoned among the capital articles; for, as this ſame apoſtle argues, "if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is alſo vain, ye are yet in your ſins". §

IN theſe, and a great number of ſimilar texts, I might eaſily have turned you to, one point only is mentioned as comprehending the object of faith. But then it ſhould be particularly minded, whenever the truth to be believed is thus ſummarily expreſſed, it ought to be underſtood, not meerly in conſiſtency with other revealed truths, but rather as reſolving itſelf into them by fair implication and natural deduction. To believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, or that he died for our ſins, or that he roſe again for our juſtification, if believed in their true ſenſe, and juſt latitude, will amount

* Rom. 3. 25. † 1 Cor. 15. 1,2,3. ‡ Rom. 10. 9.
§ 1 Cor. 15. 14, 17.

amount to the ſame thing with believing the whole doctrine of the goſpel ; for the doctrine of the goſpel is really nothing more than theſe truths unfolded by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and ſet forth in a full point of view. Our faith therefore in theſe, or the like capital articles, can't be that which is connected with juſtification, if we leave that out of their meaning, which ſubverts their true import ; or mix that with them, which eſſentially counter-acts their proper deſign, and genuine tendency. In either of theſe caſes, we believe a lie, inſtead of the truth ; " wreſting the ſcriptures to our own deſtruction".

ONLY, it ſhould be heedfully obſerved here, if the faith of thoſe who profeſs themſelves chriſtians has, in our apprehenſion, no other eſſential defect than an imagined miſtake, relative to the truth to be believed, great care ſhould be taken that we don't too haſtily, and peremptorily, heighten this miſtake into ſuch an inconſiſtency with the goſpel, as ſhall be ſubverſive of it ; ranking the perſons, who are chargeable with it, among thoſe who " ſhall be damned for not believing the truth, but having pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs". For it is not every real error, in point of belief, that will give juſt occaſion for ſo ſevere a judgment. Who is there, among the profeſſors of faith in Chriſt, that has in his mind an unerring perception of all the truths of the goſpel-revelation ? Who, that does not labor of ſome poſitive unhappy miſtake, in this or the other inſtance ? There is not a believer on this ſide heaven, whoſe faith is perfectly pure, having no mixture of error in it. Tis true, the error, if he is a juſtified

believer,

believer, can't ſo oppoſe the miſſion of Chriſt into the world to be the Saviour of it, either directly or by juſt conſequence, as to nullifie his death, or make it of little or no importance. And whenever the faith a man poſſeſſes is of this ſort, tis eſſentially faulty, and ſtands connected with condemnation, rather than juſtification. But then it ſhould always be remembered, there is a great difference between its being thus connected, in the reality of the thing, and in our apprehenſion of it. God only is the proper judge in this matter, as he only is unerring in his judgment. No man living, be his abilities what they will, can form any other than a fallible judgment in the caſe: For which reaſon, it may differ from the truth, and God's judgment with reference to it. God may ſee, in this and the other inſtance, where ignorance and error are mixed with truth, tho' men, who are partial in their views, may not, that neither the ignorance nor error are ſuch, as will defeat its deſign, or deſtroy its operation to the abſolutely needed purpoſes.

THE apoſtle Peter was doubtleſs in a juſtified ſtate, when he made that profeſſion, "Thou art Chriſt, the ſon of the living God"* For our Lord's anſwer is, "bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona, for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my father which is in heaven".† And yet, at this time, he had no notion of Chriſt as "the propitiation for ſin". Far from it, he even rebuked our Lord for "ſhewing to his diſciples, how that he muſt go to Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes,

* Matth. 16. 16. † Ver. 17.

ſcribes, and be killed and raiſed again the third day". * And the other apoſtles, tho' in a juſtified ſtate alſo, (Judas excepted) as believing that Jeſus was the Chriſt, yet had no idea, any more than Peter, of the neceſſity of his dying to make atonement for ſin. For when our Lord told them, that he ſhould be " delivered unto the Gentiles, to be mocked, ſpitefully intreated, ſpit upon, ſcourged and put to death, and that he ſhould riſe again the third day", what he ſaid was ſo remote from any apprehenſions they had of this ſort, that " they underſtood none of theſe things, they were hid from them, neither knew they the things which were ſpoken". † Nay, ſo deſtitute was their faith in Chriſt of any imagined connection with his dying and riſing again, that they ſeem, upon his death, to have given up all hope with reference to his being the promiſed Meſſiah. Say they, " We truſted it had been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael". ‡ And beſides this ignorance, relative to the great work of Chriſt as Saviour, their faith was mixt with poſitive error of no ſmall importance. For they were full of the notion prevalent in that day, concerning the Meſſiah, that he was to be head and Lord of a kingdom in this world, and that one of the main deſigns of his coming was to ſet up ſuch a kingdom. It was, as influenced by this tho't, that they diſcovered great vanity in their imaginations, and an undue temper of mind in regard of one another, while they were concerned who among them ſhould be the greateſt miniſter in this worldly kingdom. § HAD

* Ver. 21, 22. † Luk. 18. 31. to the 35th.
‡ Luk. 24. 21. § See the account at large in Matth. 20. 20. to the 29th. Mark 10. 35. to the 45th. Luk. 22. 24. to the 30th.

HAD our Lord been of the temper of ſome, who, we would hope, are his real diſciples, he would have pronounced the faith of his apoſtles, at this time, an empty profeſſion, as bewraying total ignorance of the true character, both of the father, and of himſelf: And he might the rather have been diſpoſed to this, as his ſufferings, death and reſurrection had all been foretold in the propheſies of the old-teſtament; and as beſides, he had plainly and particularly ſaid it himſelf, that "the ſon of man ought, according to the ſcriptures, both to die and riſe again". But, inſtead of telling them their faith was vain, and that they notwithſtanding all their profeſſions of regard to him, were in a ſtate of damnation, he meekly condeſcended to "expound to them the ſcriptures, concerning himſelf"; * and he did it with ſuch light and love as to make "their hearts burn within them, while he talked with them in the way, and opened to them the ſcriptures."† And in conſequence of theſe inſtructions, whereby "their underſtandings, as well as the ſcriptures, were opened",‡ a once dead, but afterwards riſen, Jeſus became the great object of their faith. Their faith, before, embraced all the truth that was abſolutely neceſſary, in their then circumſtances, in order to its being connected with a ſtate of juſtification: But, being now differently ſituated, having the advantage of clearer light and more perfect inſtruction, the object of their faith was enlarged. They not only believed in Chriſt, as firſt crucified, and then glorified; but made this the delightful ſubject of their preaching, tho' it was

* Luk. 24. 27. † Ver. 32. ‡ Ver. 45.

was "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Gentiles fooliſhneſs".

We cannot place before our view a better pattern of conduct towards thoſe, whoſe faith in Chriſt, as we apprehend, is mixt with ignorance, or error, or both, however dangerous, ſhould it be perſiſted in, than this of our Saviour. In imitation of him, we ſhould, with kindneſs and candor, make all reaſonable allowance for their ſpecial ſituation in life, their temptations, diſadvantages, yea, their prejudices, whether ariſing from education, the books and company they have converſed with, or from whatever other cauſe; and inſtead of magiſterially pronouncing their faith a lie that is connected with damnation, we ſhould rather endeavour, in all proper ways, within our ſphere, to ſet the truth before them in the ſtrongeſt point of light, that their underſtandings being opened, they may renounce their errors, and "receive the truth in the love of it."

And this, I may particularly ſuggeſt here, is the proper office of chriſtian charity or love. And, if it reigns in our hearts, as it ought to do, it will put us upon exerting ourſelves, as we have opportunity and ability, to enlighten our ignorant or miſtaken brethren, and in proportion to the danger we think their ignorance or error are attended with: Whereas, it is no part of the duty of charity or love to do that, we are neither qualified for, nor authoriſed to, that is, to ſit in judgment upon our fellow-chriſtians, and determine, if they don't believe juſt as we imagine they ought to do, that

that damnation will be the conſequence. The apoſtle Paul, in his deſcription of charity or love, ſays, among other things, "charity vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up". * It does not make men conceited and vain, fondly imagining, upon their believing the truth, as they think, that they are at once infallible, and properly qualified to judge the ſpiritual ſtate of others. It is indeed concerned for the truth, and that all ſhould believe it in its native ſimplicity ; but it is, at the ſame time, candid in its conſtructions, and ever accompanied with a becoming modeſty and humility. It won't put a man upon aſſuming airs of ſuperiority, as tho' he were an apoſtle of Chriſt, or rather Chriſt himſelf. It won't make him think himſelf fit to take the chair of judgment, and pronounce the anathemaes ofGod upon thoſe, who differ in their ſentiments from him.

The truth is, "one is our maſter, evenChriſt" ; and "we muſt all appear, before his judgment-ſeat". He only is the conſtituted judge of men's ſtate ; nor does he allow his diſciples to exerciſe this judicial power, which the father hath put into his hands. The command is, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts". † And again, "there is one law-giver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy. Who art thou that judgeſt another" ? ‡ Tis a plain caſe, I have no more right to judge another, than he has to judge me. If he differs in his ſentiments from me, I differ as much from him. And, as there is, on earth, no

* 1 Cor. 13. 4. † 1 Cor. 4. 5. ‡ Jam. 4. 12.

no appointed infallible judge, to determine on whoſe ſide the truth lies, I am equally at liberty to pronounce damnation on him, as he has to pronounce it on me ; that is, we have neither of us any right or buiſineſs to do it. Chriſt is the judge, and we muſt both, either ſtand or fall as he judges. And if this eaſy and undoubted truth of the goſpel had been thorowly believed, and practiſed upon, there would not have been that anathamatiſing among chriſtians, which has been ſo common in all ages, and among all parties ; while yet, it has anſwered no end, unleſs to promote that "bitterneſs and wrath, that clamor and ſtrife", which, if we may rely on the word of an inſpired writer, are "works of the fleſh, not of the ſpirit". *

THE ſhort of the matter is, the truths contained in the revelations of God, conſidered in one collective view, are the proper object of faith. And he that is a believer, if his belief is ſuch as beſpeaks his being in a juſtified ſtate, aſſents to all theſe truths, ſo far as his underſtanding extends, and in oppoſition to his rejecting any one of them, under the notion of its being a divine truth, or while he has an apprehenſion of it as ſuch. He can't, if he is a juſtified believer, in contradiction to the light of his mind, oppoſe or deny any one thing, be it what it will, that has been taught and publiſhed in the revelations of God. Not but that he may fall into miſtakes, not apprehending the mind of Chriſt, ſo as to admit that for a truth of his, in this and the other inſtance, which is really a falſehood : Tho' it muſt be ſaid, at the ſame time, he can't ſo far miſapprehend thoſe truths, that are of

* Gal. 5. 19.

of eſſential importance, as to ſubvert their deſign in the ſcheme of ſalvation. But then to ſay preciſely, what the truths are that are thus important, at leaſt what the nature and degree of that miſapprehenſion of them is, that will totally pervert their deſign and proper operation, ſo as to apply it to particular perſons, muſt be left with him, who is the only fit judge in the caſe, and has accordingly been authoriſed to judge upon it, and will certainly do ſo in the day God has appointed for this work. In the mean time, inſtead of aſſuming the character of Chriſt, and judging one another, we ſhould continually live in the exerciſe of chriſtian love towards each other; forbearing one another in candor and goodneſs: while, at the ſame time, we ſuitably endeavour, in all proper ways, to enlighten one another in the knowledge of God and Jeſus Chriſt, that we may all, ſo far as is poſſible, be of the ſame mind, and of the ſame judgment, as we all have the ſame common hope, and are accountable to the ſame common Lord and Judge of all.

I NOW go on, as was propoſed, to conſider the faith that is connected with juſtification, in regard of "the mind's aſſent to goſpel-truth", its proper object. For this eſſentially enters into the idea of its nature. There can't be faith, where there is not the aſſent of the mind; and wherever this aſſent is, there is faith alſo: Tho', I muſt add, not always the faith that will argue a juſtified ſtate; which ought very carefully to be remembered. Tis not ſimply a man's being perſuaded, the report of the goſpel is true, that will denominate him a juſtified believer. A perſua-

ſion of a *ſpecial kind* * is neceſſary to entitle to this

* In ſpeaking of a "ſpecial kind of faith", I ſhall not pleaſe our author, as I don't diſcover an "averſion to the epithets" that are uſually given, by the popular preachers, to faith; "as a true, ſincere, lively, manly, generous, triumphant faith, &c". Upon the uſe of theſe epithets, he ſays this "one thing is general", namely, "that where the faith neceſſary to juſtification "is deſcribed, every epithet, word, name, or phraſe, "prefixt or ſubjoined to faith, not meant as deſcrip- "tive of the truth believed, but of ſome good motion, "diſpoſition, or exerciſe of the human ſoul about it, "is intended, and really ſerves, inſtead of clearing our "way, to blindfold and decoy us; to impoſe upon "us, and make us take braſs for gold, and chaff for "wheat; to lead us to eſtabliſh our own, in oppoſi- "tion to the divine righteouſneſs; even while our "mouths and our ears are filled with high ſounding "words about the latter".—Pag. 329. Surely this paſſage was wrote, not upon mature conſideration, but in that haſte which is too common, when men are under the influence of zeal that boileth over. It is deſigned as a rebuke to the popular preachers, but it extends beyond them, and affects even the inſpired teachers of the faith of Jeſus Chriſt; conſtructively charging them with "blindfolding and decoying" the ſouls of men. When Philip ſaid to the Ethiopian eunuch, "if thou believeſt *with all thine heart*, thou mayſt" be baptized, Acts 8.38; when Paul ſpeaks of Abraham, as "being not *weak*, but *ſtrong* in faith, giving glory to God", Rom. 4. 19, 20; when this ſame apoſtle thanked God for the Theſſalonian chriſtians, "becauſe their faith *grew exceedingly*", 2 Theſ. 1. 3; when he expreſſed his hope concerning the Corinthians, "when their faith ſhould be *increaſed*", 2 Cor. 10. 15; in fine, when he ſays, "the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart,—and faith *unfeigned*", 1 Tim. 1. 5:—Were theſe epithets, or words, prefixt or ſubjoin'd to faith, as meaning

this character ; and this only will do it. Wherever there is this " diſcriminating perſuaſion", the man is juſtified ; wherever it is not, tho' he may be perſuaded of the truth, he may notwithſtanding periſh beyond the grave.

ing " to deſcribe the truth believed" ? The inſpired writers intended, by theſe adjuncts to faith, no more than the popular preachers, any ſuch deſcription. The epithets, *weak* and *ſtrong*, will have an eaſy and important ſenſe, if applied to the mind's perſuaſion with reference to truth believed ; but if applied to the truth itſelf, as deſcriptive of it, they are unintelligible. And what is the difference between the *true* and *ſincere* faith of the popular doctrine, and the *unfeigned* faith, and believing *with all the heart*, which the ſcriptures ſpeak of ? Theſe epithets do all of them refer to ſomething in the human ſoul, to ſome diſpoſition or exerciſe of the mind with regard to the truth, and are not meant " as deſcriptive of the truth" ſimply in itſelf. And the moſt natural obvious meaning of a *growing* and *increaſing* faith is, a perſuaſion of ſoul that continually gathers ſtrength and vigor, becoming more and more a lively, ſtrong, and well-eſtabliſhed principle of action. Theſe names, words, or phraſes, can relate to truth, the object of faith, no otherwiſe than as this truth lies in the mind, and is, more or leſs, fixed there. If now the ſacred writers " prefix or ſubjoin to faith, names, epithets, words, or phraſes", as deſcriptive, " not of the truth believed", but of the perſuaſion of the mind with reference to this truth, the popular preachers, in doing the ſame,do but copy after the pattern they have ſet them. And as they have ſo good authority to keep them in countenance, they have no occaſion for bluſhing, tho' our author ſees fit to charge them with " impoſing" upon their hearers, and making them, with " high ſounding words", to take " braſs for gold, and chaff for wheat".

THE new-teſtament very frequently and plainly teaches us to diſtinguiſh between believers that are in a juſtified ſtate, and a ſtate of wrath; or, in other words, between that aſſent of the mind to goſpel truth, which is connected with juſtification, and that which has no ſuch connection.

TIS recorded of "many of the rulers", in our Saviour's day, that they "believed on him"; * while yet, they were in a ſtate of condemnation. In like manner, our Lord ſays, that "many, while he was at Jeruſalem, believed on him, when they ſaw the miracles which he did". † But, from what follows, it appears, that they were far from being believers that were juſtified. And the apoſtle James largely treats of a "dead faith, that is of no profit" in the buiſineſs of juſtification. ‡

TIS obſervable, the ſpecial reaſon, in all theſe inſtances, why the faith ſpoken of was eſſentially faulty, is fetched, not ſo much from error cleaving to the object believed, as from the mind's perſuaſion with reference to this object.

THERE is indeed nothing ſaid concerning "theſe rulers", from whence we are led to think, that their faith, in their then circumſtances, was totally miſplaced in regard of its object. To be-ſure, it is not ſuggeſted, that they mixt ſo much falſehood with the truth, as that the truth, by that mixture, was intirely ſubverted. The fault rather lay in the perſuaſion of their mind, which was not ſo rooted and enliven'd as to over-ballance the fear of man with the fear of God, and the praiſe of man with the praiſe of God. For ſo our Saviour's

* Joh. 12. 42. † Joh. 2. 23. ‡ Chap. 2.

Saviour's account of the matter runs. "Among the chief rulers alſo many believed on him; but, becauſe of the phariſees, they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue: For they loved the praiſe of man more than the praiſe of God". They had been wro't upon, by what they had ſeen and heard of our Saviour, to aſſent to it as true, that he was the promiſed Meſſiah; but the fear of looſing honor from men, and expoſing themſelves to their diſpleaſure, over-powered the influence of this perſuaſion, it was ſo poorly ſettled in their minds.

THE ſame may be ſaid of the "many at Jeruſalem, that believed in his name". It does not appear, that they erred concerning the object of faith; at leaſt, that they erred eſſentially. They were perſuaded, from the miracles which they ſaw our Lord do, that he was the Chriſt. But this perſuaſion was ſo feeble in their minds, that our Saviour, who "knew what was in man", knew that it was not ſufficiently powerful to make it ſafe for him to commit himſelf to them. Had this truth ſo firmly poſſeſſed their hearts, as to engage them to adhere to him, in whom they had believed, in oppoſition to all difficulties and hazzards, our Lord, who "knew all men", would have readily "truſted himſelf with them". *

* Our author ſays, pag. 302. "If any man's faith be "found inſufficient to ſave him, it is owing to this, that "what he believed for truth was not the very ſame thing "the apoſtles believed, but ſome lie connected with, "or dreſſed up in the form of truth. So this faith "can do him no good, becauſe, however ſeriouſly and "ſincerely he believes, yet that which he believes "is falſe, and therefore it cannot ſave him". It does not

THE apoſtle James's believers were faulty in the ſame ſenſe ſtill. For ought any thing we know to the contrary, they believed the truth with reſpect

not appear, that the above-mentioned chief rulers, and common Jews, did not believe the ſame truth the apoſtles themſelves, at that time, believed: Nor is there any thing ſaid, with reference to them, from whence it can be collected, that their faith did them no good, ONLY becauſe what they believed was falſe. What they believed concerning Chriſt was, no doubt, mixed with error; and ſo was the faith even of the apoſtles, at that time. But this mixture of error was not the ONLY, or indeed the principal, defect of their faith. It rather lay, as has been ſaid, in its not being an enlivened, firmly-eſtabliſht ſpring of action. They might, for aught any thing that is ſaid to the contrary, have had the ſame idea, eſſentially, with the apoſtles, of the Meſſiah-ſhip of our Lord; which, by the way, was then a very poor, low and imperfect one, in compare with the truth. It may therefore be as neceſſary to inquire, "how a man believes"? as "what he believes"? For ſhould he believe the truth, unleſs he ſo believed it, as that his faith would certainly "work by love", that love which is "the fulfilling of the law", he would as ſurely be in a ſtate of wrath, notwithſtanding his faith, as if he "believed a lie inſtead of the truth". Our author further illuſtrates what he had affirmed by ſaying, pag. ibid. "The ſaving truth which the apoſtles believed was, "*that Jeſus is the Chriſt*". The apoſtles had one uni- "form fixed ſenſe to theſe words, and the whole new- "teſtament is writ to aſcertain to us in what ſenſe "they underſtood them. Every one who believes "that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, in a different ſenſe from the "apoſtles, or who maintains any thing in connection "with theſe words ſubverſive of their real meaning, "believes a falſehood; ſo his faith cannot ſave him". What is here offered is partly true, and partly falſe. The apoſtles, far from having always had "one uni-

form

ſpect to the great doctrines of the goſpel, but their "faith was dead". It did not ſhew itſelf to be a living powerful ſpring of action; as it would have done, if the perſuaſion of their minds had been

form fixed ſenſe" to this propoſition, *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, certainly entertained, in different periods of their apoſtolic life, widely different tho'ts about it. As has been ſaid, pag. 77, 78. before the death and reſurrection of our Lord, and yet after the apoſtles were juſtified believers, the obedience of Chriſt to the death of the croſs, as the great atonement for the ſins of men, was not included in their idea of his being *the Chriſt*. They had then no conception of him in this view of his character; which, I am ready to think, our author would make a damning fault in the belief of thoſe, who ſhould now profeſs faith in him as *the Chriſt*, becauſe it would leave out of theſe words one of the moſt eſſential truths contained in them. Nay, after the death and reſurrection of our Lord, the meaning of this capital article, in its full latitude, was but gradually opened to them. Even Peter himſelf, a conſiderable number of years after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon the apoſtles, needed a viſion from heaven to inſtruct him in this truth, that is now eaſily underſtood by every one, namely, that there is "no difference in Chriſt Jeſus between Jews and Gentiles", as by "his croſs he has broken down the partition-wall", and placed mankind, without diſtinction, upon the ſame foot in point of acceptance with God. Without all doubt, the apoſtles themſelves, and other believers in their day, put more or leſs into the meaning of the above propoſition, according to the meaſure of their knowledge in the things pertaining to the kingdom of Chriſt. And believers, juſtified ones I mean, have all along done ſo; and they do the ſame now: Tho', I would add, it was certainly a truth in the apoſtles days, and in every age ſince, and always will be in ages yet to come, that whoſoever mixes with theſe words, *Jeſus is the Chriſt*, errors that which are eſſentially

been of the right kind ; what I mean is, if it had been that aſſent which is always the caſe, when faith is connected with juſtification. *

AND

tially deſtructive of the grand truth intended to be conveyed by them, believes with a faith that cannot ſave him. And the ſame may be ſaid of thoſe alſo, who leave out of this propoſition, in their conception of it, thoſe ideas, without which it would not include the truths, that are fundamentally neceſſary to the juſtification of life. But then, it ſhould be remembered, neither our author, nor any other fallible man, however ſelf-ſufficient, can run the line, with ſuch preciſion, between what may, and may not, be left out of the above grand article, as to ſay, with any manner of certainty, applying what he ſays to particular perſons, that they muſt believe it in juſt ſuch a ſenſe, or their faith will be a "lie", or "eſſentially mixed with falſehood", and "ſo cannot ſave them". The omniſcient God, who only knows men's capacities, ſituation in life, opportunities, advantages, and the like, which are infinitely various, is the alone infallible judge in this matter ; and he ought accordingly to be conſidered as ſuch : Nor ſhould any preſume to take that work into their hands, which is properly his, and he only is fit for.

* It may be added to what has been ſaid above, our Lord, in his explanation of the parable of the ſower, expreſly declares, that the ſtony-ground-hearers "received the ſeed", that is, the word of truth as it had been preached to them. Their fault therefore was, not that they believed a lie, inſtead of the truth ; but their perſuaſion of the truth was ſlighty and ſuperficial, and for this reaſon inſufficient to bear the tryal of hard treatment for the truth's ſake. The ſame thing he ſays of the thorny-ground-hearers : They alſo "received the ſeed", that is, the pure word of God. What they believed was the truth ; but their faith, not being a well-rooted and deeply fixed perſuaſion

And this likewiſe is the great fault of the faith of chriſtians at this day. It does not lie, as I imagine, unleſs in here and there a detached inſtance, in fatal miſtakes about the truth. The incarnation, life, death, reſurrection and exaltation of Chriſt, and the great articles connected herewith, and dependent hereon, ſtand true in the minds of moſt chriſtians, at leaſt in this part of the world: Nor do they, as I conceive, commonly mix falſehood with them, at leaſt in ſo groſs a ſenſe as to be

ſuaſion of mind, was over-powered by "the cares of the world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches". And tis obſervable, the ſpecial reaſon our Lord gives, why the good-ground-hearers bro't forth fruit, and in plenty, is, not meerly that they believed the truth, which the others did not; but, having "heard the word, they KEPT it"; that is, they retained the word, the truth, in their hearts by frequent recollection, and thorow conſideration. In Matthew, the words are, "he that received the ſeed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and underſtandeth it". Our author puts an emphaſis upon this word UNDERSTANDETH, printing it in capitals, pag. 305. as tho' the reaſon of the fruitfulneſs of this kind of hearers, in oppoſition to the unfruitfulneſs of the other, lay in this ONLY, that they UNDERSTOOD the truth, and preciſely in the ſenſe that he is pleaſed to put upon it too; while the other miſtook it, or ſo corrupted it with falſehood, that they really believed a lie inſtead of the truth. But it ſhould be remembered, the original word, συνιεναι, may as well be rendered CONSIDERETH, as underſtandeth. So tis rendered, Mark 6. 52. And this tranſlation is certainly the moſt proper in the paſſage we are upon, as Luke uſes another word, which very plainly aſcertains the meaning of our Lord. "Having heard the word, they KEPT it"; which certainly implies recollection, attention, conſideration: How otherwiſe was it morally poſſible, the word ſhould have been "kept", retained in their minds?

be juſtly chargeable with wholly ſubverting their real meaning. And yet, they are far from being the ſubjects of a faith that juſtifies. And the reaſon is, becauſe the aſſent of their minds to the report of the goſpel, is not of the right kind. Tis the produce of education and tradition, rather than the teſtimony of God. Tis a feeble inoperative perſuaſion, little affecting their hearts, or influencing their lives. They receive the great doctrines of chriſtianity as ſpeculations, not important realities. They don't exiſt in their minds, truths of God in which they are deeply concerned. This, as I take it, is the faith of moſt chriſtians, ſo called. It nearly reſembles that dead faith, which, in the apoſtle James's account, is of no value to the purpoſes of ſalvation.

Not but that there are ſome, whoſe perſuaſion of revealed truths may have a very powerful influence upon them, tho' they are yet in an unjuſtified ſtate. They may herefrom be excited to a care of amending their lives, and may go a great way in the reformation of them. So it was with thoſe to whom the apoſtle Peter writes, who, "having eſcaped the pollutions of the world, thro' the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, were again entangled therein, and overcome". * They may herefrom alſo have their paſſions and affections ſtrongly put into motion. This is often the caſe in regard of the paſſion of fear, which may occaſion very painful ſenſations in the breaſts of ſinners, from an apprehenſion of the wrath of God due to them on account of their ſins. And their other affections likewiſe may

* 2 Pet. 2. 20.

may be ſenſibly wro't upon. They may gladly attend the inſtitutions of religion, hearing the word with joy ; as was the caſe of ſome in our Saviour's day, who, "not having root in themſelves,were by & by offended".* Yea, they may have raiſed in them deſires,hopes and joys,which, to all appearance, are like their's, whoſe faith is accompanied with juſtification. This ſeems to have been the caſe of thoſe, ſpoken of in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, who, tho' they had been "enlightened, taſted of the heavenly gift, partook of the Holy Ghoſt, and taſted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come", yet afterwards "fell away", ſo as that it was "impoſſible", extremely difficult, "to renew them again to repentance".† Tis paſt all doubt, that the truths of the goſpel, where men's perſuaſion with reference to them falls ſhort of that which is ſaving, may produce very conſiderable effects in them, and theſe ſo like to the effects of that faith which is precious, and will endure the tryal, that it may be difficult, if poſſible, to diſtinguiſh between them : Nay, the very ſubjects theſe effects may be deceived by them, imagining they are poſſeſſed of a faith that will ſave them, when in reality they are not.

The faith that will ſave a man, is of a "ſpecial kind". Tis a perſuaſion of ſoul, the properties of which quite differ from thoſe of the other perſuaſion we have been ſpeaking of. Three properties are inſeperable from it. The firſt reſpects "the ground or *reaſon* of it" ; the ſecond, the "object about which it is converſant" ;

* Matth. 13. 21. † Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.

ſant" ; and the laſt, the " operation of it". Each of theſe I ſhall a little dilate upon, that I may make my meaning plain and intelligible to you.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

WITH respect to this persuasion, which is connected with a man's being in a saved state, the "ground" or "reason" of it is the witness of God. He sees God speaking in the sacred scriptures, and admits the doctrines, there contained, into his mind, as undoubted verities, because testified to as such by the faithful God. Hence that description of saving faith, "he that receiveth his testimony [the testimony of Christ] hath set to his seal that God is true; for he, whomGod hath sent, speaketh the words of God". * Hence also the apostle Paul, giving an account of the faith of the Thessalonians, for which he "thanked God without ceasing", does it in that language, "when ye received the word of God, which ye received of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God". † When the faith men are the subjects of is justifying, the true bottom of it is the testimony of God. They have a view of God, as speaking in the sacred books, different from what they had before. They don't now read the scriptures meerly as the writings of apostles, or prophets, but as the writings of God; and God as

* Joh. 3. 33, 34. † 1 Thess. 2. 13.

as truly appears to them in theſe writings, as tho' he ſpake the things that are here wrote. And herein the perſuaſion of believers, that are in Chriſt, differs from that of others, who are not. Others are perſuaded of the truth of chriſtianity, as the Mahomitans are perſuaded of the truth of the Alcoran: They were told it for truth by their fathers; it was ſo handed down to them, by tradition: Or ſhould their perſuaſion be better grounded, as being the fruit of enquiry into the evidences upon which chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, they may ſtill want that lively perception of God, as teſtifying to the truth of the goſpel, which is always the true reaſon of the faith of thoſe, who ſhall be ſaved. Perhaps, as Dr. Owen repreſents the matter, * God has impreſſed on his

* I was at the pains, more than twenty years ago, to make a ſummary abſtract of the Doctor's arguing upon this point, as contained in a ſhort treatiſe of his, on "the authority or inſpiration of the ſcriptures". It is in the following words. "The ſacred ſcripture carries with it its own evidence; and this, in ſo clear and full a manner, that there is no need of any thing, beſides the ſcripture itſelf, to prove its divine original. It has ſuch viſible ſignatures of a divine hand, that tis but looking into it, and we may be ſufficiently convinced, it had God for its author. Tis with the *words of God*, as with *his works*. There is no need of any foreign help, of any extraneous evidence, to prove that the *works of God are his works*. They carry along with them evident demonſtrative marks of a divine hand. Tis but viewing them, and we may behold that in them, which will aſſure us, they had God for their author. In like manner, it may ſaid of the *words of God*; they carry along with them ſuch evident traces of majeſty, wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice and goodneſs, that tis but conſidering them, and we ſhall

his revelations, contained in the ſcriptures, ſuch ſignatures of his wiſdom, power, holineſs, juſtice, goodneſs, truth and faithfulneſs, with all the reſt of his adorable perfections, that, at all times, and in all places, they are capable of declaring themſelves to be his, and of being perceived to be ſo, and in ſuch a light as to become the ſtrongeſt ground of aſſent to the mind.—But however this be, the man, whoſe faith is ſaving, has this view of them, and actually ſees and hears God ſpeaking in them; which is not the caſe, where the faith is only common.

The ſhall know they are not human, but divine. Not that all are able to ſee the marks of a divine hand in the holy ſcriptures. But then, this ariſes, not from their not being to be ſeen there; but from that ignorance, with which "the god of this world has blinded men's minds"; as is ſometimes the caſe, in regard of the *works*, as well as *words* of God. Some men have ſo "darkened their hearts", that they can ſee nothing of God in any of his *works*, neither his wiſdom, nor power, nor goodneſs; tho' theſe things are ſo plainly viſible, that tis, one would think impoſſible, but they ſhould be diſcerned by all: and the ſame perfections of God are ſo fully manifeſted by his *words*, that if they can't be perceived, it muſt be becauſe men have not eyes to ſee; or, "in ſeeing, they will not perceive". The bible, wherever it goes, carries along with it, its own evidence. It has that in it, which will forever diſcriminate it from all human writings. So much of God is viſible in it, that whoever reads it, and is free from prejudice and paſſion, will and muſt own it to *be of God*. As God, when he created the world, and the things that are therein, left ſuch characters of "eternal power, and God-head" on them, as evidently point out their author; and ſo ſuited them to ſtrike conviction into the minds of all rational creatures, that, without any other teſtimony from himſelf, or any thing elſe, under

THE next property of this perſuaſion, which is connected with life, reſpects the "object believed". And this appears in a peculiar light. Some, it may be, before they were the ſubjects of this perſuaſion, had, by the help of reaſon and revelation, formed conceptions of the attributes of God that were right and juſt; and had been led alſo into ſentiments concerning the mediatorial undertaking of Chriſt, and the ſeveral offices he has ſuſtained and executed as redeemer, that had no eſſential mixture of falſehood with them. Thoſe, whoſe belief of the goſpel is not juſtifying, may yet be men of conſiderable attainments in chriſtian knowledge. They may be well acquainted with the doctrines of faith, and embrace them in their ſimplicity, as "once delivered to the ſaints", at leaſt without conſtruing them in a ſenſe deſtructive of their real meaning. Doubtleſs, many among the juſtified, before their being endowed with the faith by which they were juſtified

the naked conſideration of what they are, they fully declare their creator; inſomuch that they are wholly without excuſe, who will not learn and know him from thence: So in giving out his *word* to be the baſis of the new creation, he has, by his ſpirit, implanted in it, and impreſſed on it, ſuch evident marks of the glories of his nature, that, without any other witneſs, it declares itſelf, at all times, and in all places, to be his, and ſo makes good its own divine authority, as that the refuſal of it, upon *its own evidence*, brings unavoidable condemnation on the ſouls of men". This reaſoning of the Doctor will not appear triffling to conſiderate, well-diſpoſed perſons. Perhaps, the more cloſely it is attended to, the better fitted it will be found to ſtrike the mind with conviction. It perfectly falls in with the experience of thoſe, who are "believers unto life". They behold the ſcriptures in this light.

fied, were perſons of this character. But they did not, till they were poſſeſſed of this faith, apprehend theſe truths as they do now. They were then matters of ſpeculative opinion, rather than ſolid belief; but now, they have a real and lively exiſtence in them. Light has ſhone into their minds, and caſt ſuch a luſtre on theſe truths, that they ſee them in their divinity, glory, and conſtituted connection with men's everlaſting well or ill being. They don't now entertain them in their tho'ts, as matters of ſcience only, but truths of the neareſt and moſt ſolemn concern. They are ready to wonder they could be ſo little influenced by them, they have now ſo clear and full a view of their certain reality, and infinite importance: Or if their perception of theſe truths awakened their fears, or raiſed their hopes, or put them upon religious endeavours, they were not ſuch as gave them, what the ſcripture calls, a "ſpiritual diſcerning of ſpiritual things".

And this perception of goſpel-truths is, perhaps, the chief thing intended by that "illumination of the ſpirit", on account of which ſinners are ſaid, in the new-teſtament, to have their "underſtandings enlightened", their "eyes opened"; to be "turned from darkneſs to light", and the like.

Those indeed who were in heatheniſh darkneſs, when the goſpel was firſt preached to them, (as was the caſe of the greateſt part of the world, in the apoſtles days) might properly enough be ſaid to be "of the day, and not of the night", as the truths of the chriſtian religion, which they were before totally ignorant of, were now exter-

nally revealed to them. They might well be amazed to think of their former ignorance, in compariſon with their preſent knowledge; and thoſe who were thus "darkneſs", *might*, without a figure, be ſaid to be "light in the Lord"; yea, to be "called out of darkneſs into marvellous light". But ſtill, in regard even of theſe heathen, the truths of the goſpel, however manifeſted externally to them, were inſufficient to their being "transformed by the renewing of their mind", but by their being accompanied with an internal influence of the ſpirit, whereby their eyes were opened to ſee them in ſuch a light as to convince their conſciences, affect their hearts, awaken their powers, and become a powerful principle of action in them.

And this is that influence of the ſpirit which is now principally needed, and wherein principally conſiſts his work in enlightening the minds of ſinners. It does not lie, as ſome may be ready to imagine, in giving them new revelations, in ſuggeſting to their tho'ts new truths, which the world knew nothing of before; but in ſetting thoſe old truths, which are contained in that public, ſtanding, authentic revelation of the divine mind, the holy bible, before their view, in ſuch a convincing commanding light, as that they ſee them in their reality, and importance, and ſo as to be powerfully excited by them. Thus it is with all juſtified believers. They ſee the truth in this divine and ſpiritual light; which is not the caſe with others, whoſe faith comes ſhort of that which is ſaving.

THE laſt property of this juſtifying perſuaſion reſpects its "influence," or "operation".* And this

* Our author ſays, page 301. "the queſtion about faith muſt be ſet aſide, where the inquiry turns upon, how a man is affected by a teſtimony of what he believes"? Tis undoubtedly true, the effects of faith are not faith; and to move a queſtion that would turn upon this point, would be to aſk, whether the effect and the cauſe are the ſame thing? Which would be to invert the order of nature. But ſtill, it may be highly proper to inquire, how a man is affected by his faith? And this, in order to his knowing whether his faith is ſaving. He cannot indeed, in any other way, attain to this knowledge. Our author very juſtly obſerves page 303. "that a difference often takes place between the confeſſion of the mouth, and the belief of the heart, which time only can diſcover". He ſays again p. ibid. "what a man believes in his heart, will certainly influence his conduct in life. God bare witneſs to the apoſtles, as having unfeigned faith as influenced by the ſpirit of it in their lives". It may therefore be affirmed, with the permiſſion of this author, if he will be conſiſtent with himſelf, that that belief of the goſpel-report will not ſave a man, which will not influence his conduct in life. How then is it "to ſet aſide the queſtion about faith" to inquire, how a man is affected by what he believes? Muſt he not thus inquire, if he would, upon ſolid grounds, be ſatisfied, that his faith is unfeignedly that, which the ſcripture connects with the juſtification of life? His faith may be this ſaving one in the view of God, as it lies a naked perſuaſion in his mind; but it muſt ſhew itſelf to be ſuch by its effects, or the man himſelf can't juſtly entertain this tho't of it. In deſcribing the faith therefore that is ſaving, tis really neceſſary to ſpeak of it, not only as a perſuaſion of the truth, but ſuch a perſuaſion of it as will ſhew itſelf in works. This is the grand criterion of its nature as ſaving; by this it is diſtinguiſhed from all counterfeits. It is the root, ſeed, or firſt principle, from whence proceeds all that a man ever is, as a chriſtian,

this is of ſuch a nature, as that the man poſſeſſed of it will be quite altered from what he was. A new being is, as it were, given to him. He is furniſhed with new ſprings of motion and action. He has that within him, which, with the concuring influence of the Spirit, always in readineſs to be afforded to him, will change the bent of his heart, give a new turn to his affections, and diſpoſe him to walk in newneſs of life. Nor will it fail of producing theſe effects. His faith indeed is, ſeminally and virtually, the "new man in Chriſt"; the "workmanſhip of God, created again to good works". It is, in embrio, the "goſpel penitent"; the "chriſtian convert"; the "new-born creature"; the ſinner "quickened, who was dead in treſpaſſes and ſins"; the man "transformed by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt", ſo as to be not "conformed to this evil world". It is, in one word, every thing in the root, principle, and firſt beginning, that is any where connected, in the bible, with that eternal life, which is the great promiſe of the goſpel.

It may accordingly be obſerved, this account of that perſuaſion of the truth, which is connected with ſalvation, perfectly coincides with the deſcriptions that are frequently given of it in the ſacred ſcriptures. Tis a faith that purifies the heart. "Purifying their hearts by faith". * Tis a faith that is accompanied with the new-birth. "Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt (that is, in the ſaving ſenſe) is born of God". † Tis a faith

chriſtian, in deed and in truth; and it ought therefore to be repreſented, not meerly as a perſuaſion of goſpel-truth, but a perſuaſion of this ſort or kind.

* Acts 15. 9. † 1 Joh. 5. 1.

faith that will ſanctifie the man that poſſeſſes it. "Which are ſanctified by faith in me", in Jeſus Chriſt. * Tis a faith that works by love. "Neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but faith that worketh by love", love to God and man, "the two commandments on which hang both the law and the prophets". † Tis a faith that overcometh the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God"? ‡ In a word, tis a faith that will ſhew itſelf in all goſpel good works. "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For as the body without the ſpirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead". §

It will, perhaps, more ſtrikingly, and at the ſame time more familiarly, convey to you an idea of this perſuaſion of mind, as a principle of the powerful influence we have deſcribed, ſhould it be exemplified to you by ſome ſignal inſtances. The firſt I would mention ſhall be that of Abraham. And I the rather chuſe to begin with him, becauſe he is repreſented by the apoſtle Paul, ‖ as "the father of all that believe", whether under the jewiſh or chriſtian diſpenſation; that is, their father, ſo as that they muſt reſemble him in faith, in order to its being "imputed to them alſo for righteouſneſs".

And what is the idea the ſcripture gives us of the faith of Abraham? Evidently this, that it was a practical principle, or, in other words, ſuch

* Acts 26. 18. † Gal. 5. 6. ‡ 1 Joh. 5. 4, 5.
§ Jam. 2. 20. 26. ‖ Rom. 4. 11, 12.

a perſuaſion of the exiſtence, perfections, moral government and revelations of God, as diſpoſed and influenced him to honor the divine authority, by chearfully complying with its commands, wherein they were made known, whatever difficulty might attend an obedient regard to them; illuſtrious patterns of which are ſet before our view, by the ſacred pen-men.

He received a command from heaven, in thoſe words, * "get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's houſe, unto a land which I will ſhew thee. And I will make thee a great nation, and will bleſs thee, and thou ſhalt be a bleſſing". Great things, it is acknowledged, were promiſed to engage his obedience to the heavenly call; but ſtill he muſt quit his country, forſake his friends & relatives, yea, and leave his father's houſe, that he might go whither he knew not. We can't make his caſe our own, and not perceive the difficulty of the tryal he was now put to. And what was the reſult? Why, his faith in God inclined and enabled him to a ready ſubmiſſion to the divine pleaſure. So we read, † "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out unto a place, which he ſhould afterward receive for an inheritance, obeyed".

A like, but far more ſevere, command was that, ‡ "take now thy ſon, thine only ſon Iſaac whom thou loveſt, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of". What an amazing gradation is this! It ſeems calculated, in its manner of delivery, to engage all

* Gen. 12. 1, 2. † Heb. 11. 8. ‡ Gen. 22. 2.

all the ſofter paſſions of the human mind, againſt a complyance with it. It muſt be "his ſon", his own fleſh and blood, himſelf exiſting in the perſon of his offspring. It muſt be his "only ſon Iſaac". There is a ſingular emphaſis in this. For "Iſaac" was the ſon given him in his old-age, beyond the ordinary courſe of nature, and in fulfillment of a divine promiſe. And it was this ſon in ſpecial, this ſon only, thro' whom "his ſeed", according to the expreſs word of God, "could be reckoned". This "ſon Iſaac" might well be the delight of his heart, the deareſt to him of any object in this world. Tis therefore ſaid, "thine only ſon Iſaac whom thou loveſt". And what was he to do with this ſon of his love? It follows, "get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering". A moſt extraordinary command! God never before called Abraham to ſo ſevere a tryal, and the like he has never ſince put any other man to. Twas not eno' that he muſt part with this ſon by death; twas not eno' that he muſt part with him in a bloody manner: But he muſt, in his own perſon, with his own hands, "ſlay him for a ſacrifice to the Lord"; yea, and after he had ſlain him, he muſt conſume his body in the fire": Otherwiſe he could not have offered him for a "burnt-offering", according to the command he had received from God. Let any man that is a father look within, and attend to the working of his own bowels, and this will tell him, beyond all language, the dreadful ſeverity of the ſervice Abraham was now called to. And what was the effect? The account of it is given in theſe words,* "and Abraham roſe up early in the morning, and

* Ver. 3.

and took Iſaac his ſon, and went to the place of which God had told him". Far from diſputing the will of God, he was inſtant in his obedience to it. He did not make excuſes, a variety of which were ready at hand; he did not put off the matter for the preſent; but takes the firſt opportunity to fulfill the divine pleaſure. What a miracle of ſelf-denied obedience was this! The bleſſed God tho't fit to ſignifie his ſpecial approbation of it, in thoſe words, * "I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon, from me". Now, all this reverence of the divine majeſty, all this ſubmiſſion to the divine government, was the fruit of faith. So we are taught to think of the matter, by the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews. Says he, † "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Iſaac; and he that had received the promiſes, offered up his only begotten ſon". To the like purpoſe, the apoſtle James, refering to this ſame affair of Abraham's "offering his ſon Iſaac upon the altar", makes that appeal, ‡ "ſeeſt thou how faith wro't with his works"? And its thus operating, gave abundant proof, that it was a practical principle, a perſuaſion of ſoul that powerfully influenced his whole inner and outer man.

Such was the faith of Abraham, that faith of his which was "counted to him for righteouſneſs". And it was the ſame kind of faith that was "counted" to his poſterity, under the Moſaic diſpenſation, "for righteouſneſs" alſo. They could not have been believers, ſo as that their faith would have been connected with juſtification, unleſs,

* Ver. 12. † Chap. 11. ver. 17. ‡ Chap. ver. 22.

leſs, like the faith of their father Abraham, it had been a powerful principle, habitually influencing their hearts and lives. For, as the apoſtle Paul obſerves, * they only who "walked in the ſteps of the faith of their father Abraham," could have "faith imputed to them for righteouſneſs", as he had. Not that all, under the law, who were in a ſtate of juſtification, as Abraham was, kept pace with him in his "walk of faith": But they were all, in a meaſure, followers of him in the ſame way of faith. They all trod in his ſteps, tho' not with equal exactneſs. To ſpeak plainly, they were all, like him, the ſubjects of an active faith; a faith that was an abiding principle, diſpoſing and enabling them, as occaſions were offered therefor in providence, to like exerciſes of love to God, dependance on him, ſubmiſſion to his all-wiſe pleaſure, and obedience to his righteous commands; tho' not in the ſame eminent degree: Nor could they otherwiſe have been "of faith", ſo as to be "bleſſed with faithful Abraham". † They could not have been his children, in the ſpiritual ſenſe; for as our Savior obſerved to them, ‡ "if ye were Abraham's children, then would ye do the works of Abraham".

And it was by this ſame faith, I have been deſcribing, that all the Patriarchs, even from Adam to Abraham, were juſtified and ſaved. The writer of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, has put this beyond all doubt.

Says he of Abel, one of the ſons of Adam, § "by faith he offered unto God a more excellent ſacrifice

* Rom. 4. 11. † Gal. 3. 11. ‡ Joh. 8. 39.
§ Gen. 11. 4.

ſacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witneſs that he was righteous, God teſtifying of his gifts". He believed in God, and, it may be, in the promiſe of God, that "the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head". And it was under the influence of this perſuaſion, that he made choice of "the fatlings of his flock, and the fat thereof"* to offer in ſacrifice to God; and when he offered the ſacrifice, this ſame perſuaſion put him upon yielding to God, together with the external offering, the inward homage and devotion of his ſoul, and, at the ſame time, his intire truſt in the divine mercy for acceptance. It was owing to this faith of Abel, ſhewing itſelf by works, that he "offered a more excellent ſacrifice than Cain", and "by it he obtained witneſs that he was righteous, God teſtifying of his gifts".

In like manner, tis obſerved of Enoch, the ſeventh from Adam, † that "by faith he was tranſlated, that he ſhould not ſee death"; that is, by faith that was a powerful principle of action. For it wro't both on his heart and life, and in an uncommon degree; making him an extraordinary inſtance of piety towards God, and righteouſneſs and goodneſs towards men. Moſes declares concerning him, ‡ that he "began early to walk with God", and that he "went on walking with him for three hundred years together". And it appears, from the epiſtle to the Hebrews, that this was the fruit of a firm and unſhaken faith. Both his entrance on a religious courſe of life at firſt, and his afterwards going on in it for ſo long a ſpace of time, was owing to his faith. This was the ruling principle of his life. In conſequence of

* Gen. 4. 4. † Ver. 5. ‡ Gen. 5. 21, 22.

of this faith, " he had, before his tranſlation, this teſtimony, that he pleaſed God", and " by it" he was diſtinguiſht from the reſt of mankind, by being taken to the other world, without paſſing thro' death.

And it was by the ſame kind of faith thatNoah alſo, an antediluvian Patriarch " became heir of the righteouſneſs which is by faith". * He not only gave credit to the notice God had given him of an approaching deluge ; he not only lookt upon this event, tho' in futurity at preſent, and greatly diſtant too, as what would certainly, in time, be the truth of fact ; but his faith, in this revealed truth, was an inward, powerful ſpring of action. It had a juſt and reaſonable influence both on his mind, and on his conduct. For, ſays the ſcripture, " by faith, being warned of God, of things not ſeen as yet, " he was " moved with fear ", and ſet himſelf " to prepare an ark ".

His faith wro't upon his " fear". Not that he was in anxiety, leſt he ſhould be involved in the general deſtruction by water; for the ſame revelation that aſſured him of this amazing judicial procedure of God, aſſured him likewiſe that he ſhould ſuffer no harm by it. But his faith in God's reſolution to drown the world, awaken'd in him an holy awe of the divine juſtice, holineſs and power, and ſuch a reverential regard to the authority and government of God, as was a mighty reſtraint to him from ſin, and a powerful incentive prompting him to the diſcharge of duty, and particularly that branch of it, "the building an ark", as God had commanded. The apoſtle therefore

* Heb. 11. 7.

therefore obſerves, after having ſaid, "Noah was moved with fear", that he "prepared an ark for the ſaving of his houſe". He was ſo perſwaded of the truth of what God had ſaid, notwithſtanding the contrary appearances of ſecond cauſes, notwithſtanding the improbabilities ariſing from the unlikelyhood of the thing in itſelf conſidered, that he began upon the work of "building the ark"; and he went on ſteadily, and in an uniform courſe, notwithſtanding the univerſal infidelity of the age in which he lived, and the ridicule of many an unbelieving ſcoffer, till he had finiſhed it; evidencing the reality and greatneſs of his faith by his punctual obedience to the will and pleaſure of God. Such was the faith "by which he became heir of the righteouſneſs which is by faith".

In fine, it was this ſame kind of faith, that was "reckoned" to even Moſes, the founder of the jewiſh law, "for righteouſneſs". For the faith he was happily the ſubject of inclined & enabled him to prefer an "afflicted ſtate with the people of God", before the honors and pleaſures of "Pharoah's court". * It carried his views beyond this preſent world, to the coming "recompence of reward", and influenced him to "eſteem the reproach of Chriſt, greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt". In a word, it was a perſuaſion of ſoul, that was ſufficiently powerful to take off his "affections from things on the earth", & to fix them "on things that are above", and to engage him in a ſteady care to approve himſelf, in his whole conduct, to the will of him, who is the ſupreme "law-giver, king and judge".

You

* Heb. 11. 25.

You have now ſeen, that the faith of Abraham, and thoſe antient worthies, who lived and died in favour with God, was an inward, powerful ſpring of right affection, and right conduct, towards God and Man. And our faith muſt be of the ſame kind, if we would hope, upon good grounds, to "inherit the promiſes". Our faith in God, and Chriſt, and the great truths revealed in the goſpel, muſt have a governing influence on our hearts, and whole external behaviour of ourſelves in the world. It muſt "work by love", love to God, and Chriſt, and one another. It muſt "ſhew itſelf in works", in works of piety, in works of righteouſneſs, in works of ſobriety. It muſt be, in a word, ſuch a perſuaſion of the truth, as ſhall be effectual to conform our hearts and lives to the will of God, and the example of our Savior and maſter, Jeſus Chriſt.

Nor unleſs we explain this perſuaſion of ſoul, as thus virtually comprehending in it the whole chriſtian character, can it be the faith, in conſequence of which, a man may, with truth, be denominated a juſtified believer. For it is to be remembered, the juſtified perſon is a pardoned one, if we may believe the apoſtle Paul, who introduces David, when deſcribing "the bleſſedneſs of the man to whom God imputeth righteouſneſs without works", as ſaying, "bleſſed are they whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered. Bleſſed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute ſin". * But whoever is not virtually, or in true eſtimation, a "goſpel-penitent", is in a ſtate of guilt, and actually liable to the wrath of God. So we are taught to think by the apoſtle Peter,

* Rom. 4. 7, 8.

Peter, whoſe direction to his hearers is, " repent for the remiſſion of ſins". * And again, " repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out". † And a greater than this apoſtle has ſaid, " except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh". ‡ Tis to be remembered alſo, the juſtified ſinner is one that ſhall be glorified, according to that expreſs declaration of the inſpired Paul, " whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified". § But tis moſt peremptorily affirmed, and by our Savior himſelf, that " except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God", his kingdom in its ſtate of heavenly glory. ‖ And an apoſtle of his, ſpeaking in his name, and as guided by his ſpirit, poſitively declares, that " they who obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction, from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power". ¶ Unleſs therefore a man can be in a juſtified ſtate, and a ſtate of wrath ; in a ſtate in which he may be admitted to heaven, and can have no entrance into this holy and happy place, and this at one and the ſame time, the faith which denominates him a juſtified believer, muſt contain in it, in God's eſtimation, repentance, the new-birth, and goſpel-obedience ; that is to ſay, it muſt be conſidered as the root, ſeed, or firſt elements of the whole chriſtian temper and behaviour : Or, in other words, it muſt be explained to mean, as it really does mean, " the word of truth", ſo dwelling in the heart, as that it may properly be called " the ſeed of God", that " incorrupible, abiding ſeed", which, when it comes, by time and growth, under the influence of the divine ſpirit, to be opened, dilated

* Acts 2. 38. † Chap. 3. 19. ‡ Luk. 13. 4. 5.
§ Rom. 8. 30. ‖ Joh. 3. 3. ¶ 2 Theſ. 1. 8, 9.

dilated and expanded, will appear to be "the man of God", adorned with his image, and "thoroughly furniſhed to all good works".

In this view of the faith, that is connected with juſtification, beauty, ſtrength and harmony, run thro' the whole new-teſtament-writings, with reference to this important affair: Whereas, if we explain it in any other oppoſite ſenſe, we ſhall make them perplext, I may ſay unintelligible, if not ſelf-contradictory.

Men may, if they pleaſe, perplex the moſt clear and eaſy truth; rendering it unintelligible, while, at the ſame time, it is far from being "hard to be underſtood". And this, perhaps, has been as much done in the article we are upon, as any in the whole chriſtian revelation. But ſuch a method of conduct is of no ſervice to religion, or the ſouls of men; but a great hurt to both. If we keep more cloſely to the ſcripture, and pay leſs regard to metaphyſical niceties, our notion of faith will not be involved in difficulty, nor ſhall we be puzzled to underſtand that, which is ſo cloſely connected with our eternal well-being in the coming world. *

* It will, probably, be tho't by ſome, that I have been greatly deficient in not making the *eſſence* of faith, as juſtifying, to conſiſt in the ſoul's relyance on Chriſt, or truſting in his righteouſneſs, as the only pleadable title to life. This, with them, is the principal thing the ſcripture means by the faith that juſtifies. In anſwer whereto I would ſay, I know of no text, in all the bible, that gives this idea of faith; and there is this good reaſon to think, there is no ſuch text, namely, that truſt in Chriſt, relyance on his righteouſneſs, is always conſequent upon faith, and a fruit of

I HAVE now ſaid all that I intended, to let you into a clear idea of the faith by which "the juſt do live". It only remains to make what has been offered upon this head, ſtill more uſeful, by ſome important reflections.

SERMON

of it, as truly as love, repentance, humility. or any other chriſtian grace. Wherever there is faith, there will be this truſt. They are inſeperable from each other. But then, this truſt muſt be conſidered, not as faith itſelf, but the effect of faith. And, in truth, how ſhould a man truſt in Chriſt for righteouſneſs, before he believes he has wro't out an all-ſufficient righteouſneſs for ſinners ? If he firſt believes in Chriſt, as having "finiſhed tranſgreſſion, and bro't in an everlaſting righteouſneſs", he may, in conſequence of this faith, place his intire truſt in him. His relyance on Chriſt, and the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as conſequent upon faith, and one of its fruits, is perfectly agreeable to the order of nature ; otherwiſe, an inverſion of this order. Tis indeed impoſſible, a reaſonable creature, acting reaſonably, ſhould truſt in Chriſt for righteouſneſs, till he is firſt perſuaded, upon the teſtimony of God, that there is ſuch a righteouſneſs to truſt in him for. Having faith in this righteouſneſs, he may now place his intire dependance on it. And, as I ſaid, if his faith is of the right ſort, it will certainly ſhew itſelf to be ſo, by its operating in this way.

SERMON V.

I. TIS quite easy to collect, from the account we have given of faith, that there is no contradiction, not the least inconsistency, between the apostles, Paul and James, wherein they may seem to oppose each other, with respect to the affair of justification. The apostle Paul says, * "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds (or works) of the law". The apostle James says, † "by works (or deeds) a man is justified, and not by faith only". The apostle Paul says again, ‡ "Abraham was not justified by works". The apostle James says, § "Abraham was justified by works". This seeming contradiction between these apostles, has strangely puzzled expositors, and other christian writers; many of whom have rather left their readers in confusion, than satisfaction, notwithstanding their learned and laborious disquisitions. It does not appear to me, to require any great degree of attention, to perceive, that these apostles were perfectly of the same mind, and spake precisely the same thing, how-

* Rom. 3. 28. † Chap. 2. ver. 24. ‡ Rom. 4. 2.
§ Chap. 2. ver. 21.

ever it may look, at the firſt glance, as tho' they differed, not only in words, but in ſentiment.

When the apoſtle Paul ſays, "we are juſtified by faith without works", he can't be ſuppoſed to mean, that we are juſtified by a faith that will not be productive of works. Should we put ſuch an interpretation on his words, we ſhould make him contradict himſelf. For he elſewhere affirms of the faith that juſtifies, that it will "work by love", both to God and man; that is, in other words, that it will ſhew itſelf by works. When the apoſtle James ſays, on the other hand, "a man is juſtified by works, and not by faith only", the idea he would communicate, is evidently this, that we are juſtified, not by a "dead faith", but a faith that will be the ſource of evangelically good works. For this was the point he had in view to prove; and he accordingly illuſtrates it by leting us know, that a "dead faith", a faith that is not followed "by works", would be of no more profit in the buſineſs of juſtification, than good words would be to an "hungry and naked man", while we afforded him "no charitable relief". Hitherto theſe apoſtles, inſtead of contradicting, perfectly agree with each other, and indeed with all the ſacred writers.

But the apoſtle James ſays, "Abraham was juſtified by works"; whereas the apoſtle Paul ſays, "he was not juſtified by works". Neither is there any contradiction between them here, unleſs we attend to the ſound only of their words, and not the ideas intended to be conveyed by them. When the apoſtle Paul ſays, "Abraham was not juſtified by works", what he intends is,

that

that he was not juſtified upon the ſcore of works, in conſideration of any thing he had done in conformity to the divine law: In which ſenſe, no man, any more than Abraham, was ever yet juſtified, or ever will be. And is he herein contradicted by the apoſtle James? Can it be ſuppoſed, when this apoſtle ſays, "Abraham was juſtified by works", that he deſigned to affirm, that it was upon a plea grounded on their agreement with the law, as the rule of judgment? Had he meant to declare this, he muſt have bewrayed ignorance of the whole goſpel-ſcheme of redemption; yea, he muſt, in true conſtruction, have "made void the death of Chriſt". And yet, he muſt be interpreted to mean this, to make out a contradiction between him, and the apoſtle Paul. The exact truth is, the apoſtle James, in ſaying, that "Abraham was juſtified by works", really intends nothing more nor leſs, than this, that he was juſtified by a faith that was not "dead", but "ſhewed itſelf by works". And herein he perfectly coincides with the apoſtle Paul, whoſe doctrine, upon this head, is preciſely the ſame.

It may be worthy of ſpecial remark here, both the apoſtles, Paul and James, argue from the caſe of Abraham, in proof of the points they reſpectively had in view. And, by briefly conſidering what they ſay upon it, we ſhall eaſily be convinced, that their ſentiments, upon the affair of juſtification, were exactly the ſame.

The apoſtle Paul proves, * that "Abraham was not juſtified by works", from that ſcripture-declaration, † "Abraham believed God, and it

* Rom. 4. 2, 3. † Gen. 15. 6.

was counted to him for righteouſneſs". As if he had ſaid, ſo far is it from being true, that Abraham was juſtified for his works, upon the account of his good deeds, that the way in which he was juſtified, was this ; " he believed God", and God was pleaſed, upon the plan of grace thro' Chriſt, to accept of him as righteous. But then, it ought to be particularly rememered here, this faith, which was " counted to Abraham for righteouſneſs", was not a " dead faith", but a " working" one ; that is to ſay, it was ſuch a perſuaſion concerning God, and the revelations of God, as was a powerful ſpring of obedience to him, an inward principle that diſpoſed and enabled him to do, or ſuffer, any thing at the divine call. Abraham was in fact the ſubject of ſuch a faith as this ; and this faith, thus influencing his heart, and operating in his life, was the very faith that God, in grace or favor, " counted to him for righteouſneſs".

And this is the very thing meant by the apoſtle James, when he ſays, " Abraham was juſtified by works". He did not intend to ſuggeſt, by theſe words, (as he muſt have done to contradict the apoſtle Paul) that " law" was the rule of Abraham's juſtification, and that he was accordingly " juſtified by works", in conformity to this rule. Nothing could be more diſtant from his deſign, thro' the whole courſe of his reaſoning, in this chapter. He had been treating of " the faith" by which men, upon the goſpel-plan of mercy thro' Chriſt, are ſaved, and ſhewing that it was not an empty " dead faith", but a faith that diſcovered its reality in " works" of evangelical obedience. And, in order to illuſtrate this great point he had in view,

view, he introduces the caſe of Abraham, and ſays, ver. 21. "he was juſtified by works"; that is, by a "working faith", not a fruitleſs one; by a faith that was not "dead" and "alone", but alive, and accompanied with "works", in conformity to the divine will. The connection of theſe words, with the argument he is purſuing, evidently determines this to be his meaning, and that he could have no other. And, that we may be convinced of it, I ſhall place before your view, the whole paragraph here relating to Abraham. It ſtands thus, * "Was not Abraham our father juſtified by works, when he offered Iſaac his ſon upon the altar? Seeſt thou how faith wro't with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the ſcripture was fulfilled, which ſaith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteouſneſs; and he was called the friend of God. Ye ſee then how by works a man is juſtified, and not by faith only". As if he had ſaid, I have been ſhewing you, that an empty faith, a faith that is "dead", and "alone", not operating in "works" of obedience to the goſpel, will never avail a man to ſalvation. Let me illuſtrate this important point, by bringing your view to the caſe of Abraham, our father, according to the fleſh. Was he juſtified by a "dead faith", a faith that did not "ſhew itſelf by works"? Is not his offering Iſaac his ſon, upon the altar, a plain proof of the contrary? Don't you perceive, by this illuſtrious "work", evidencing his ſubmiſſive obedience to the pleaſure of almighty God, that his faith, inſtead of being "dead", "wro't together with works"? Don't you perceive, that his faith, by its not being "alone", but thus operating in

 "works",

* Ver. 21, 22, 23, 24.

"works", was compleatly fited to the purpoſe of his juſtification? Don't you perceive, in this way of his juſtification, thro' an operative faith, the fulfillment of that text of ſcripture, which ſays, "Abraham believed God", and his "faith" in God, thus ſhewing itſelf in "works" of obedience and ſubmiſſion to his governing authority, was "counted to him for righteouſneſs", in conſequence whereof, he "became the friend of God"? You may then, my brethren, both eaſily and plainly ſee, in this example of Abraham, I have ſet before you, that "a man is juſtified, not by faith only", not by a faith that is "dead", and "alone"; but by a faith that ſhews itſelf in "works" of obedience, as occaſions are offered therefor, in the providential government of God.

THIS explanation of the apoſtle James makes out a connection, and conſiſtency, in his whole diſcourſe, upon this head of faith and juſtification. Upon this plan of interpretation, it runs ſmooth and eaſy, and appears to be ſtrongly put together. And, taking this to be his ſenſe, (as it unqueſtionably is) wherein does he differ from the apoſtle Paul? Far from contradicting what he ſays, he really means the ſame thing: Nor can his words be underſtood, ſo as to oppoſe the apoſtle Paul, unleſs they are interpreted in a ſenſe that will deſtroy the coherence of his diſcourſe, and make him a looſe, weak and unconnected writer; which would be far from reflecting honor on him.

IT will, probably, be objected againſt this reconciliation of theſe apoſtles, and indeed againſt the idea I have given of faith, that they ſet up "works"

"works" in the affair of juſtification; for if we are juſtified by faith, and faith is a work, we are then juſtified by "a work of our own", and not by "the work of Chriſt". We ſhall ſee at large, in the next diſcourſe, that this objection is a meer pretence, having no real ſolidity in it. However, I would ſo far prevent myſelf, as to ſay at preſent; tho', inſtead of denying faith to be a work, I avow it to be one, yet I utterly deny, at the ſame time, that it is a work, in the ſenſe in which works are any where, in the bible, excluded from juſtification.

THAT faith ſhould be viewed as a work, in the affair of the ſinner's juſtification, is vehemently oppoſed by ſome;* but in evident contradiction to what is ſaid in the ſacred books. Tis there obviouſly ſpoken of as "a work required", a "duty commanded", as truly ſo as to love God, or our neighbour. When our Lord "preached the goſpel of the kingdom, ſaying, BELIEVE", did he require nothing of his hearers? Did he command no duty? Did he only exhort them to ſet ſtill and wait, till the ſalutary truth" was conveyed into their minds, without any tho't, motion, action, or endeavour of their's, in any ſhape or form?

* Our author will tell us, that faith, in this view of it, is not "a work", but a meer "paſſive reception of the truth", in which there is no labor, not the leaſt activity of the human mind. This is a leading ſentiment in his letters. But it is unhappily attended with this great difficulty, that it exhibits an idea of faith, that the ſcripture knows nothing of. The ſcripture-faith always includes in it human activity; and tis otherwiſe a uſeleſs, worthleſs thing. See what is contained in ſome of the pages that immediately follow.

form? It would be highly abſurd to make him ſpeak thus; eſpecially, as he has himſelf taught us to look upon faith, as "a required work", in thoſe words of his, in anſwer to a queſtion that was put to him by ſome of the Jews, "this is the work of God", the work God commands you to do, "that ye believe in him whom he hath ſent", John 6. 28. * Obſervable alſo to the like

* Our author ſays upon this text, pag. 369. "The Jews were plainly inquiring, how they might be qualified to do the works God requires, in his law, in order to juſtification. The anſwer of Jeſus plainly imports, that they would be poſſeſſed of the whole work God required, in knowing that God ſent him to work it, without their working more or leſs". It is allowed, Jeſus was ſent to work the whole work that God required as the *conſideration* upon which, that in the *virtue* of which, the ſinner is juſtified, "without his working more or leſs", in this view of working. But ſtill, the queſtion recurs with as much force as ever, did not Chriſt require theſe Jews to believe that God had ſent him thus to work? If he did, as the words directly affirm that he did, there is then ſomething required, a duty commanded, with which they were obliged to comply. One can ſcarce read this text, and not be neceſſitated to think, that ſome work was here enjoined them. The Jews themſelves entertained this tho't of the matter. For they are introduced ſtill aſking, ver. 30. "what ſign ſheweſt thou, that we may ſee and believe thee? What doſt thou work"? That is, what evidence giveſt thou of thy divine character, what miraculous work doſt thou do, that we may attend to it, and be perſuaded to believe that God ſent thee? Surely they imagined they had ſomething to do, ſome work to perform, in conſequence of our Lord's direction: Nor can it be ſuppoſed, he would have directed them to the duty of believing in him, if no motion, action, or exerciſe of their ſouls were neceſſary in order hereto; but the work was God's, to the excluſion of any exertments of their's, in any ſort or kind.

like purpoſe is that paſſage in the apoſtle John's firſt epiſtle, * "this is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another". Do we believe in Jeſus Chriſt? Our faith, if the authority of God is therein regarded, is a compliance with his command, and, as ſuch, "a work done", a duty performed, as truly as when we "love one another" in obedience to God, who has required us ſo to do. It is not my buiſineſs to inquire, at preſent, how we come by an ability to believe. Be this as it may. Whenever we do believe, if we therein have our eye to God (as we muſt have, or our faith will be of no value) we pay religious honor to him, by doing a duty he has required of us; and, by thus doing a duty, we do that which is a work, and may, with as much propriety, be ſo called, as any other act of obedience that we perform. Nor can we indeed, as intelligent moral agents, believe in Jeſus Chriſt, upon the teſtimony of God, and in compliance with his command, but by the exerciſe of our reaſonable powers. The capital truth, comprehenſive of the whole object of faith, is this, "Jeſus, who is the Chriſt, died for our offences, and roſe again for our juſtification". I would hereupon aſk, can this truth exiſt in our minds, as a truth we give credit to, without the uſe of our intellectual capacities? In order to its ſtanding true in our minds, muſt we not diſcern the connection of the terms in which it is expreſſed? Muſt we not know its juſt import? that is, have in our minds diſtinct ideas of, at leaſt, all the eſſential truths that are contained in it? Muſt we not perceive the evidence upon which it comes teſtified to us? Muſt we not

* Chap. 3. ver. 23.

not be ſatisfied, that this evidence will juſtifie us, as reaſonable creatures, in yeilding to it? In fine, muſt we not have ſuch a view of God, as, in our believing this truth, to do honor to his faithfullneſs and authority? And is there, in all this, no exerciſe of our intellectual and moral powers? No action, no motion, of the ſoul in any ſhape whatever? Nothing is more indubitably clear and certain, than that faith partakes of all the properties of a work, and is as truly ſuch, as love, humility, or any other chriſtian grace: Nor is it poſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe.

But then, it is utterly denied to be a work, in the ſenſe in which works are excluded in the affair of juſtification. For which reaſon there may be, and actually is, a perfect conſiſtency in ſaying, that "no man can be juſtified by works", and that "every man that is juſtified is juſtified by faith, which is a work"; becauſe faith, tho' a work, is not a work in that ſenſe, in which works are excluded from juſtification. It is an indiſputed maxim, that, in explaining the ſcripture, regard is always to be had to the MEANING of words, and not their meer ſound. Upon which, the queſtion is, what does the ſcripture mean by "works", when it ſays, "no man can be juſtified by works"? Look where you will, and you will always find, that it means works recured to as a title to juſtification; works that juſtifie in their own virtue; works that are the conſideration upon which juſtification is claimed; works that are oppoſed to grace and Chriſt, and depended on inſtead of theſe; in fine, works that give occaſion for boaſting in ourſelves, rather than glorying in God thro' Jeſus Chriſt, when we are juſtified.

This

This is the ſcripture-meaning of works, when it declares, that "no fleſh can be juſtified by them".*

And

* In this view of works, tis eaſy to ſee there is no need to deny, that faith is a work, when we connect it with juſtification. Nor will its being ſpoken of as a work, infer the leaſt inconſiſtency with thoſe words of the apoſtle Paul, which are bro't by our author to prove it to be ſuch, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs", Rom. 4. 5. That we may have a clear underſtanding of theſe words, and their perfect conſiſtency with what has been ſaid of faith as a work, let it be conſidered; the apoſtle, in the 2d ver. of this chapter, argues that Abraham was not juſtified upon the foot of law, in conſideration of works done in conformity to law, becauſe he would then have room for BOASTING; which he had not. His words are theſe, "If Abraham was juſtified by works, he hath whereof to glory [boaſt]; but not before God". As if he had ſaid, If Abraham had been juſtified upon a claim founded on works done in obedience to the law, he would have had matter of glorying, he might have boaſted of his juſtification, as what was his due; but before, or in the ſight of God, he had no ſuch reaſon for boaſting. And why? It follows, as an illuſtration of what he had thus argued, ver. 3, 4, 5. "What ſaith the ſcripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteouſneſs. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs". As if he had ſaid, tis evident from the ſcripture, that Abraham had no room for BOASTING in the affair of his juſtification, becauſe it aſſures us, that "he believed God", and that God, of meer grace, "counted his faith to him for righteouſneſs". Now there would have been no need of this "gracious counting", if, by his works, he had attained to righteouſneſs in the eſteem of the law; for, when a perſon is righteous in the eye of the law,

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And according to this meaning of works, no man ever did, or ever will obtain "the juſtification of life", in conſequence of his doing them. But faith is ſo far from being a work, in either of the above ſenſes, or in any ſenſe that will oppoſe "the grace of God", or "the finiſhed work of Chriſt"; that it principally operates in doing honor to them

in conſideration of the works of righteouſneſs he hath done in conformity to it, "the reward is not counted a gift", but "adjudged to him as his due": Whereas, if he does not work at all, with a view to attain a righteouſneſs, that will make him righteous, in the account of the law; but, inſtead of ſuch working, believes in God, who, of his meer grace, juſtifies thoſe, who, at the very time he juſtifies them, are UNGODLY in the eye of the law, to him faith is "counted for righteouſneſs", ſo as to remove away all ground of glorying or boaſting. This, I am perſuaded, will be found, upon the ſtricteſt examination, to be the real meaning of the apoſtle. The works, he here ſpeaks of, as giving occaſion for boaſting, and therefore excludes from having any thing to do in the affair of juſtification, are evidently ſuch as are wro't to ſupport a claim to the reward, in the eye of the law; they are ſuch, as, when a man has performed them, places him beyond the need of grace, in order to his being "counted righteous"; they are ſuch as he may produce as his righteouſneſs, and demand their being accepted, in this view, by the rule of law; they are ſuch, in a word, as lay him under no bonds to "grace", in the affair of his juſtification, but, inſtead of aſcribing it to "grace" that he is juſtified, he may attribute it to "his own works", and "glory" in them, "boaſt" of them, as the juſt ground and reaſon hereof. Need I now ſay, that faith, ſhould it be conſidered as beſpeaking the uſe of intellectual faculties, and the exerciſe or activity of the human mind, is yet far from being a work, in the ſenſe that works are here excluded by the apoſtle? How ſhould faith be a work to be glo-

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them both : Nor can it be conceived, wherein God could have taken a more effectual method to exalt his own grace, and the merits of his ſon, than by giving faith, conſidered as a working-principle, a neceſſary place in the affair of the ſinner's

ried in, and boaſted of, as tho', in its own virtue, it would give a title to juſtification, when tis not poſſible a man ſhould have faith, and not ſee that he is abſolutely undone without the interpoſition of grace. The very ſuppoſition, that he may be juſtified upon the foot of faith, eternally excludes all boaſting ; becauſe he could not be thus juſtified, but of the free favor of God. He cannot indeed believe ſo as to be juſtified, without believing that he is UNGODLY, and a SINNER, in the eye of the law, and, as ſuch, deſerving of damnation, at the time when he is juſtified. And will ſuch a faith, whatever activity it may carry in it, afford the leaſt conceivable ground for boaſting ? Far from this, the more active and vigorous a man's faith is, the more effectually it will guard him againſt that glorying the apoſtle is ſo jealous of.

Another text urged againſt faith's being conſidered as a work, is Rom. 11. 6. "If by grace, then it is no more of works : Otherwiſe grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace : Otherwiſe work is no more work". But what has been above offered, is equally applicable here. I ſhall therefore only add at preſent, that it concerns our author, and thoſe who think as he does, to reconcile the juſt recited words of the apoſtle Paul, and thoſe alſo, Eph. 2. 8, 9. "By grace ye are ſaved,—not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt", with the doctrine they teach, pag. 356. that it ſhall be rendered to believers "according to their works" ; yea, and that it is a "point of juſtice", that it ſhould be thus rendered to them. Perhaps, the reconciliation of their own doctrine, with the above texts, will enable others, in the ſame way, to reconcile their notion of faith, as a work, with the ſame inſpired words. I may venture to reſt the whole upon this iſſue.

ſinner's juſtification. This will be diſtinctly and largely illuſtrated in what may hereafter follow.

II. Tis a juſt remark, from what has been ſaid of the "faith that juſtifies", that the evidence in proof to a man, that he is poſſeſſed of it, can't be full and ſtrong, till his faith has "wro't by love, and diſcovered itſelf to be of the right kind by its genuine fruits. His faith, previous to this, that is, before it had produced the meet effects, may be of the juſtifying kind; and God may know it to be ſo. For which reaſon, ſhould he be called out of the world (as it is poſſible he may) before he has had opportunity to "ſhew his faith by his works", it would be no hindrance to his admiſſion into the heavenly kingdom. For, being poſſeſſed of faith in its truth, God knows that he really is, in the firſt rudiments, that penitent and convert, that new-man in Chriſt and partaker of the divine holineſs, which the ſcripture points out as the proper "meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſaints in light". We judge of the cauſe by the effects, of the ſtate of men's minds, by the tenor of their actions: But God, who is "greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things", can judge of effects by their cauſe, and know what a man's temper and conduct will be, by the ſprings and principles he is endowed with. Conſequently, as faith, when of the right ſort, is all and every thing, in the root or ſeed, whoever is the ſubject of it, in the view of God, whoſe judgment of it, while lying naked in the mind, is infallibly true, will be owned by him as one, marked out, in the goſpel-revelation, for the joys of his preſence. But this is not the way, in which we are to judge of the faith, we may

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe ourſelves to be endowed with. We can't be aſſured, * upon juſt grounds, that tis of the

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* Our author's way to aſſurance does not appear to me, after all he has ſaid in illuſtration of it, to be more ſcriptural, or leſs puzzling, than their's he finds ſo much fault with. He diſtinguiſhes between "the aſſurance of faith", and "the aſſurance of hope". But this, as it reſpects the main thing in queſtion, is to diſtinguiſh, and upon his own plan too, where there is really no material difference. For no man, according to him, can be aſſured that his faith is genuine, or, in words he will, perhaps, like better, that what he believes is the "ſimple truth" that juſtifies, but by its operation. And, if the fruit of faith muſt be attended to, before a profeſſor of faith can know that his faith is of the right kind, it comes at laſt to the ſame thing, whether this aſſurance be called "the aſſurance of faith", or "the aſſurance of hope": To be ſure, he can't have "the aſſurance of hope", without having "the aſſurance of faith". He may be vainly confident, that he is in a ſtate of acceptance with God, while yet he is not aſſured, that the "ſalutary truth" dwelleth in him. But he can't, upon ſcripture-grounds, be aſſured of his being in this accepted ſtate, any further than he is aſſured, that he believes the truth; and of this latter he can be aſſured in no way, but by the effects his faith produces. A man's hope therefore, muſt keep pace exactly with his faith. If he han't "the aſſurance of faith", he can't have "the aſſurance of hope". His latter aſſurance muſt always be proportioned to the former.—Our author ſeems likewiſe to think, that "peace with God", and "rejoicing in Chriſt", as flowing, under the influence of the comforting ſpirit, from ſelf-deny'd obedience out of love to the truth, is one of the principal grounds of "the aſſurance of hope". The difference here between him, and others, lies chiefly in a point of order; in which, as I apprehend, the miſtake is on his ſide. But be this as it may, the grand queſtion to be decided is, how ſhall a man be aſſured, that his

joy

right kind, but by its operation. The effects it produces, are the principal evidence, in proof of its being the faith that juſtifies.

AND

joy is true, and not falſe? Our author's way to an aſſurance of this is, when placed in a juſt and clear light, much the ſame with their's, which he rejects: Nor is it either ſhorter, or leſs perplext. He muſt have, according to his own way, if I may uſe the language he has done, without being tho't to ſpeak prophanely of a matter of ſuch ſerious importance, as "long-winded and dreary a ſtory" to tell, as any of thoſe he oppoſes. For he can never know, according to his own principles, whether his joy is true or falſe, genuine or counterfeit, but by examining, not only into his "ſelf deny'd obedience", but "the love of the truth" it muſt proceed from; and being thereupon aſſured, that his obedience took riſe from this ſource. Perhaps, upon tryal, this will be found as difficult and puzzling a buiſineſs, as he has made it, upon the ſcheme of the popular preachers. He ſays, pag. 395. "No profeſſor of the faith can form a proper judgment of his ſtate, meerly by "poring on his own heart", and examining whether his religious tho'ts are of the right kind, or not; for, if he is not engaged in the practice of the peculiar precepts of chriſtianity, or in doing thoſe works which are the proper fruits of faith, he has no occaſion for ſelf-examination; as there is, in that caſe, no room for any doubt concerning his ſtate". I freely concur with him in what he here ſays; but then I would obſerve, on the other hand, neither can he, upon his own ſcheme, form a proper judgment of his ſtate, moſt certainly not an aſſured one, meerly by examining whether he is "engaged in the practice of the peculiar precepts of chriſtianity"; for, as he ſays, pag. ibid. "men may be engaged in the practice of the ſame works, from VERY DIFFERENT MOTIVES, of which every man's own conſcience is beſt judge". And let it be remembered, the MOTIVE to practice, in the preſent caſe, muſt be found to be "the love of the ſalutary truth". Belief of this truth muſt inſpire

love

AND this, it may be proper to obſerve here, is the true ſcripture-method of attaining to "the joy of faith", the meaning of which none can know, but by their own inward ſenſations. Not that this "comfort of the holy Ghoſt" is derived,

love to it, and this love muſt produce this obedience. This is a leading ſentiment in this writer's plan. And are we not now unavoidably led to that "poring on the heart", which he ſpeaks of in ſo ſneering a way? "Love" is, moſt certainly, an affection of the ſoul. Conſequently, if we muſt know that our religious practice flows from "love", and love to "the ſimple truth", we muſt look within, and very narrowly too, or we may place vain confidence, as thouſands have done, in the room of goſpel-aſſurance. 'Tis a plain caſe, our author, if he would, in his own way, attain to an aſſurance of his being in a good ſtate towards God, muſt repair to that ſame ſort of exerciſe he lightly calls "heart-work", and be thorow in it too; otherwiſe he may, as "the heart is deceitful", delude himſelf into ruin.——I ſhall add here, faith, in his account, is a meer pretence, a vain profeſſion, unleſs it is "a principle of life and action", producing, among other things, "that change upon a man, which is called *repentance unto life*", pag. 408; "that change likewiſe which gets the name of *ſelf-denyal*", pag. 409; "that change alſo which is called *converſion*, *regeneration*, *new-creation*, or *the new creature*; *putting off the old man with his deeds*, and *putting on the new-man*; *walking not after the fleſh*, *but after the ſpirit*", pag. 412. Now, if faith is ſuch a principle as this, no man's joy, under the profeſſion of faith, can be any other than "the joy of the hypocrite", unleſs it is productive of theſe fruits; and conſequently no man can be aſſured, that his faith is genuine, till he finds, upon tryal, that it has actually bro't them forth. Upon which, I can't help admiring, that he ſhould ſpeak, as he ſometimes does, with ſuch an air of merriment, upon that change in men, which is ſignified

either from faith itſelf, or any of its effects, in their own proper virtue. The work of Chriſt, as Savior, is its only ultimate ground. It finally terminates in this, as its true cauſe or reaſon. Men may, it is acknowledged, place an undue dependance upon thoſe exerciſes, internal or external, which they imagine are owing to the influence of faith; ſubſtituting them in the room of Chriſt, and fetching their conſolation from them, inſtead of him. But this does not argue, that we ought not to look to the workings of our hearts, and the actions of our lives, as produced by faith, in order to our enjoying that "peace of God",

fied by repentance, converſion, and the like. If ſome, thro' miſtake, have tho't, that this change is previous to faith, in the order of nature, tho' not of time; will ſuch a ſpeculative error ſubvert the reality of the thing itſelf? May not a man be the ſubject of this change, tho' he ſhould not think juſt as our author does about the order, or way, in which he became poſſeſſed of it? Is it the manner of real chriſtians to make a farce of ſo ſerious and intereſting a matter, turning it into ridicule and banter? Does the language he has uſed look like their's, whoſe love of the truth has transformed them into new men in Chriſt? He would have acted more in character as a profeſſed diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſerved his cauſe too much better, if he had ſpoke upon this head in words of ſober gravity. His manner of writing, it may be feared, has been the occaſion of leading ſome "unwary ſouls" into contemptuous tho'ts of the *moral-change*, meant in ſcripture, by CONVERSION; which yet, is ſo neceſſary a one, that no man can enter into the holy heaven without it: Yea, ſhould a man make the higheſt pretences to the aſſurance, both of faith and hope, he would, notwithſtanding, if his faith did not operate to effect this CHANGE, be certainly bid, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt, to depart away from him, among the workers of iniquity, whom he knew not.

God", which belongs to thoſe who are believers in Chriſt. The influence of faith, that is to ſay, the effects it produces, both in the inner and outer man, muſt be heedfully attended to, in order to our knowing, whether our faith is of the juſtifying kind, or not. This can be known, with ſufficient certainty, in no other way. The effects of faith are the proper ſcripture-medium, by which we prove its diſtinguiſhing nature, and become fully ſatisfied, tis the "faith by which we may live". And, conſequently, tis by theſe effects, that we attain to a ſtate of ſpiritual peace and comfort. "Perceiving about us theſe fruits of faith", we juſtly & ſtrongly conclude from hence, that our faith is of the right kind; and, if of the right kind, connected, by the goſpel-plan, with "the juſtification of life": And if we are "juſtified by faith", we may, upon the moſt ſolid foundation, enjoy "peace with God thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt". It is Chriſt, or, what means the ſame thing, the work of Chriſt as the redeemer of ſinners, that is ultimately the ground or reaſon of this "peace"; but ſtill, the "working of faith", the fruits it produces, are the "medium" by which we come to the enjoyment of it: Nor can any man give a good ſcripture-reaſon for his rejoicing in hope", but from his being able to "prove his faith by his works". For this is the only ſtrong and full evidence, that can be given in proof of its being of the right kind. And unleſs it be of this kind, tis certain we cannot be juſtified in conſequence of it; and if we cannot be juſtified, ſhould we have "peace in our minds", it muſt be upon a falſe foundation. And this leads me,

III. In the next place, to put both you and myſelf upon the proof of our faith, that we may know, upon juſt grounds, whether it be of the right ſort; what I mean is, whether it is the faith by which "the juſt do live"? And, from what has been diſcourſed concerning the properties of faith, eſpecially that never-failing one, its "ſhewing it ſelf by works", we may, under the conduct of the ſpirit of truth, attain to a fullneſs of ſatisfaction reſpecting this intereſting and important point.

Do we believe in God, as he has revealed his character in the inſpired books? We ſhall be influenced by our faith, if it is juſtifying, to love him with our whole ſouls, to fear him above all that are called gods, to truſt in him as the alone all-ſufficient help, to reſign ourſelves up to the diſpoſal of his all-wiſe and righteous pleaſure, and to behave towards him with all dutiful obedience; rendering to him the homage of our hearts, and the worſhip of our lips.

Do we believe, that "God has ſent his ſon into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world thro' him might be ſaved"? We ſhall, in conſequence of this faith, be filled with the higheſt admiration of his "good-will towards men", and be in a temper of mind to fall down before him in humble adorations, and grateful acknowledgments. That will be our language, and we ſhall expreſs it with a truly thankful ſoul, "bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael; for he hath viſited and redeemed his people, and hath raiſed up for us an horn of ſalvation in the houſe of his ſervant David, as he ſpake by the mouth of his holy prophets".

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Do we believe the great things that are ſpoken, in the new-teſtament, of Jeſus Chriſt, his perſon and office, what he has done and ſuffered for ſinners, and is now doing for them in heaven, in conſequence whereof he is "able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him"? Our faith, if genuine, will diſpoſe and excite us to repair to him as the "one mediator", thro' whom alone we may hope for acceptance with God to eternal life: And we ſhall accordingly commit our ſouls, and their everlaſting concerns, into his hands; truſting in the atoning virtue of his obedience to the death, and his conſequent exaltation to all power, that he might compleat the deſigns of God's grace towards an apoſtate world.

Do we believe the ſcripture-declarations concerning the holy ſpirit of God, and the part he bears in forming men to a "meetneſs" for the future glory, honour and immortality? We ſhall hereupon put ourſelves under his guidance, depend upon his aids, cheriſh his motions, follow his directions, and make it our conſtant care, and earneſt prayer, that we may, under his influence, be preſerved blameleſs to God's heavenly kingdom.

Do we believe the odiouſneſs of ſin, in its nature and guilt, eſpecially as ſet forth in the ſufferings of Chriſt, when he ſhed his precious blood on the croſs to "make atonement for it"? Our faith will ſet in motion our paſſions of grief, ſhame and hatred. We ſhall "mourn for our tranſgreſſions, as a man mourneth for his firſt-born ſon". We ſhall bluſh and be confounded at the remem-

brance of our paſt iniquities. Sin will appear to us, in the ſtrongeſt point of light, "the abominable thing which God's ſoul hateth": And we ſhall "hate it with a perfect hatred", and avoid it as the moſt deadly evil; no more allowing ourſelves in practice of it, at any time, or in any inſtance whatever.

Do we believe that "the commandment", according to the revealed repreſentation of it, "is holy, juſt and good"? We ſhall herefrom be formed to an obedient and ſubmiſſive temper of ſoul. We ſhall be reconciled to the government of God, and willing in all things to do, or ſuffer, as he would have us. That will be the inward ſenſe of our minds, "we eſteem all thy commands concerning all things to be right. O how love we thy law! It is our meditation all the day. We prize thy commands far above gold, and have choſen them for our heritage forever. O give us underſtanding, and we will keep all thy righteous precepts. Thy law is good, therefore thy ſervants love it".

In ſhort, whatever we believe, as contained in the revelations of God, by Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles, will, if our faith is of the right kind, operate in us, and have an influence upon us, anſwerable to the nature of the object believed; either exciting our love to God, or truſt in Chriſt, or care to do honor to the divine government and authority, by our ſubmiſſion and obedience in this, or the other inſtance, as occaſions are offered therefor in providence.

If

If our faith does not thus operate, it is that "dead faith" the apoſtle James ſpeaks of, which can be of no profit to us in the buiſineſs of ſalvation. * Whereas, if it "ſhews" its reality and power,

* "According to the apoſtle James, let a man make "ever ſo ſound a profeſſion of the faith, and talk of "ever ſo many illuminations and experiences, if we "find him ſeeking to paſs theſe upon us as proofs of "his being a chriſtian, without ſhewing his faith in "the works of love, commanded by Jeſus Chriſt, "we may ſafely repel his confidence, by telling him, "*the devils alſo believe*". Thus ſpeaks our author with exact truth and juſtice. I would add ſtill further, whatever illuminations and experiences, internal feelings and religious motions, any may pretend to, wherein they are excited by, or take riſe from, the "artful addreſs" of ſome admired ſpeaker, inſtead of the pure word of truth, they are not worthy of being ſo much as mentioned in proof of the real being of faith: They ought rather to be looked upon as the operation of animal-nature. This is certainly the caſe, when goſpel-truths have no power to excite theſe ſenſations, but as borrowed from the voice and action of ſome popular preacher. If perſons have no reliſh for revealed truths, no diſpoſition to hearken to them; or if theſe truths are inſufficient to move their hearts, touch their conſciences, ſet in motion their affections, and produce any good impreſſions on them, unleſs they are enlivened by "the wiſdom of words", that is, the eloquence of man, it may be taken for granted, without further conſideration, that ſuch experience "ſtands in the wiſdom of man", not "in the power of God". The word of the eternal God, ſimply and nakedly propoſed, is "able", under the influence of the divine ſpirit, "to make men wiſe to ſalvation". It needs no human art to give it force and energy. And if what men experience is the effect, not of the "word itſelf", but the "manner" in which it is diſpenſed, tis wholly a mechanical motion, and of no more profit, in the ſpiritual ſenſe, than that which cauſed by the "ſounding of braſs", or "the tinkli is

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power, by ſuch good effects as has been deſcribed, we may be ſure it is of the right ſort, and will be accompanied with the "juſtification of life".

LET

of a cymbal". It may be worthy of ſpecial remark, the apoſtles "ſought not glory of men". They deſpiſed the tho't of gaining applauſe by artful addreſſes, purpoſely contrived to move their paſſions. Their manner was, by a ſimple, plain "manifeſtation of the truth, to commend themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God". They knew, tho' their hearers gloried in them, they would reap no ſaving good by their miniſtrations, unleſs they "heard God ſpeaking" in the meſſages they bro't to them. Their dependance therefore for ſucceſs was grounded on the "power of God's word, meerly as ſuch", and not on the force or virtue they could give it by any art, or craft, they could uſe in the delivery of it. The latter might have ſecured votaries to them, and the profitable, as well as pleaſing advantages, connected with popular admiration and acceptance; but it would have been of no ſpiritual profit to their hearers: It might have tickled their fancies, but would not have ſaved their ſouls. The apoſtle Paul, tho' learned in all the wiſdom of that day, that is, in all the arts that were fitted to gain admirers, by working upon animal nature, eſteemed it a reproach to the infinitely intereſting truths of the goſpel, to deliver them in a theatrical worldly-wiſe manner, as tho' they needed human art and help to gain admitance into the minds of men. Says he to the Corinthian-chriſtians, 1 Cor. 2. 4. "My ſpeech, and my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom; but in demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power". But why did he converſe, and preach, in a ſimple plain manner, to the neglect of that art and eloquence, which were commonly prevalent in that day? The reaſon is given in the words that immediately follow, "that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men; but in the power of God". And if this was a good reaſon for this conduct then, it is ſo now, and will always be ſo to the end of the world.

LET us then prove our faith by our works. And let us be faithful and critical in the tryal of it; putting ourſelves under the guidance of that God, who "knoweth our down-ſitting, and our up-riſing, who compaſſeth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with our tho'ts, and all our ways". We may, by thus proving our faith, "have rejoicing in ourſelves"; yea, we may, upon juſt grounds, "rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory".

SOME of us, it may be, have no need to be at the pains of this tryal. We know at once, without any labor to prove it, that our faith is nothing more than a pretence, a profeſſion without fruits, unleſs ſuch as evidence its falſehood. We "name the name of Chriſt"; but take no care to "depart from iniquity". We "ſay unto Chriſt, Lord, Lord"; but "don't do the will of his father which is in heaven". We "come unto God as his people come, ſit before him as his people, and hear his words; but we do them not: with our mouths we ſhew much love, but our heart goeth after our covetouſneſs". We wear "a form of godlineſs", and, it may be, a ſpecious one too; but we "deny the power of it"; being "lovers of ourſelves, covetous, proud, diſobedient, unthankful, unholy, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God". If this is the juſt character of any of us, and we are conſcious to ourſelves that tis ſo, we are, without all doubt, in a ſtate of wrath; and muſt know that we are ſo, if we have only a common faith in the revelations of God. And is this a ſtate in which we may, as reaſonable creatures, ſit down in quiet?

We

We must be stupidly inattentive, or we should be deeply concerned to think, what a dangerous situation we are in. "The god of this world" must have "blinded our eyes", and "seared our consciences", or we should anxiously enquire, How shall we be "delivered from the wrath to come"? Let us "consider, and shew ourselves men", by endeavouring, in the gospel-way, to obtain this deliverance.

SOME of us, it may be, have proved our faith by its fruits, and the result has been "peace of conscience" and "joy in the holy Ghost"; as knowing herefrom, that we are interested in the favor of God, and the purchases of the redeemer's cross. If this should be the happy case of any of us, we have infinite reason to bow the knee, in humble grateful adorations of the rich grace of God, that has been manifested towards us, thro' Jesus Christ. We should principally ascribe it to God, and not to ourselves, that we are what we are, and can "rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed to us". Let us do nothing to darken the evidence of our being in a justified state, "thro' the redemption there is in Jesus Christ", or to obstruct the lively actings of the hope we have of being hereafter crowned with immortal glory. And the stronger our hope is, the more vigorous let our endeavours be, to "glorifie the name of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ". And as we know, that we are "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ", let it be our care to be "followers of him as dear children". And as, in virtue of our being children, we are "heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that

fadeth

fadeth not away", and have an aſſured hope that tis " reſerved for us in heaven", let us walk worthy of ſuch a bleſſed hope ; " purifying ourſelves even as Chriſt is pure" ; aiming at, and endeavouring after, the higheſt degrees of conformity to the example he has ſet us. Let us not " think, that we are already perfect" ; but make it our daily care to get the better of our corruptions ; to become more ready, chearful and conſtant in doing the duties of the various relations we ſuſtain in life ; to grow in love, meekneſs, humility, patience, reſignation to the divine pleaſure, and all thoſe graces that adorn the chriſtian's character. Let us be more and more contented with the condition it ſhall pleaſe God to alot to us, in the preſent world ; finding no fault with him, tho' he ſhould call us to conflict with tryals, grievous to bear ; as knowing, that if we meet with evil things here, we ſhall be comforted hereafter. In a word, let us live above the world, having our heart in heaven, and " our converſation in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt", who, " when he appears a ſecond time without ſin unto ſalvation", will " change our vile bodies, that they may be faſhioned like to his glorious body" : And we ſhall then be ever happy with him, in the kingdom of his father.

In fine, ſome of us, it may be, tho' we have tried our faith, and have ſo done again and again, are yet full of fears and doubts, as not knowing, after all, whether it is of the right ſort. If we can't peremptorily determine, on the one hand, that we have no other faith than that which is common to thoſe profeſſors of chriſtianity, to whom

whom our Lord will finally ſay, "I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity"; ſo neither, on the other hand, can we, with deſireable ſatisfaction, ſay, that "we have believed in him that raiſed Jeſus from the dead", with a faith that has been "imputed to us for righteouſneſs". And we accordingly live ſometimes hoping, ſometimes fearing; always doubting, but never rejoicing in an aſſured hope of our being intereſted, thro' faith, in the purchaſes of the redeemer's croſs. And this, perhaps, is the truth of fact, with reſpect to the generality of believers in Chriſt, thoſe of them, I mean, whoſe faith is connected with that "eternal life", which is "the gift of God thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt". It may ſeem ſtrange it ſhould be thus, when ſo many, in the days of the apoſtles, were, in conſequence of their faith, the happy ſubjects of "peace with God", and "rejoicing in Chriſt Jeſus"; eſpecially, as the way to theſe "comforts of the holy Ghoſt" is the ſame now, that it was then; and chriſtians, in theſe days, are favor'd with the ſame revealed means, and advantages, chriſtians were then, in order to their attaining to the "joy of faith". But the principal reaſon of this is to be fetched, from the ſlothful inactivity of the preſent chriſtians. They don't take due care to ſhew to themſelves, any more than to others, that they have faith, by the exerciſe of thoſe graces, which, "by Jeſus Chriſt, are to the praiſe and glory of God". If they are poſſeſſed of theſe graces, they have made no great improvements in them. They have not "grown in grace, and in the knowledge of Chriſt", as might be expected and wiſhed. "The work of God may be begun in them"; but it has not been

been carried on, in any conſiderable degree. They have not attained to the " ſtature of men in Chriſt" ; but may rather be eſteemed " babes" : And their exertments, in the chriſtian life, are accordingly feeble and lanquid, and too often interrupted by the influence of temptation and corruption. And what wonder is it, if they live in uncertainty about their ſpiritual ſtate ; and, inſtead of enjoying true ſerenity of ſoul, are perplext with fears and doubts.

WOULD we attain to " the full aſſurance of hope", and to " joy in God thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt", in conſequence hereof, we muſt, as the apoſtle Peter directs, * " give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs, brotherly-kindneſs, & charity" ; and not only ſo, but " to abound in theſe things". The apoſtle's view is, to engage our zeal and care in attaining to the greateſt eminency in theſe graces, which at once " adorn" both the chriſtian's character, and " the doctrine of our Savior Jeſus Chriſt". Nor can we take a more ſcriptural, or effectual, method to " make our calling and election ſure". For it is by the graces of God's ſpirit, thrown into exerciſe upon all proper occaſions, that our faith is ſhewn, not to be " dead", but to exiſt in us as a real principle of life. And the higher we riſe in the actings of our love to God, truſt in Chriſt, hatred of ſin, weanedneſs from the world, and the like, the ſtronger & brighter will be the diſcovery, our faith makes of its reality and power in us. It now ſhews itſelf by its proper fruits ; and by theſe, under the influence of the divine ſpirit, we may certainly

* 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7.

certainly know, that it is the "faith, by which the juſt do live": And in conſequence of this knowledge, we may, upon the moſt ſolid grounds, "joy in God thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have received the atonement".

THE beſt remedy, after all that can be ſaid, againſt ſpiritual darkneſs and diſtreſs, and the beſt way to get ſpiritual peace and joy, is to rouſe ourſelves up to thoſe "labors of love", which are the "work of faith"; to quicken our pace in the paths of righteouſneſs; to be more earneſt in our cares, reſpecting our ſouls, and another world; to ſtrive more reſolutely againſt ſin; to be more watchful againſt temptation; to love God more intirely; to pray to him more fervently; and to be more conſtant and devout in the ſervices of piety, and more circumſpect in ordering our converſation among men, that, "as we have received how we ought to walk and pleaſe God, we may abound daily more and more".

OUR faith ſhould be productive of good diſpoſitions, and theſe ſhould be continually ſtrengthened, till they become well eſtabliſhed principles of action. And ſo ſhall we find, from our own experience, that the wiſe man ſpake the truth, when he ſaid, "the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhineth more and more to the perfect day. * As we thus, by the operation of faith, under the bleſſing of heaven, improve in holineſs, we ſhall find our doubts and fears will diſperſe and vaniſh, and our hope grow into aſſurance. We ſhall know, by the abounding

* Prov. 4. 18.

abounding fruits of our faith, that our state is safe, as "there is no condemnation to us, being in Christ Jesus". And "the peace of God will now rule in our hearts". We shall feel serenity in our tho'ts, tranquility in our consciences, and joy in our breasts that is "unspeakable and full of glory". We may now solace ourselves under the heaviest weight of outward affliction; yea, we may "rejoice in tribulation", as we are chastened because we are children, and under discipline for our spiritual and eternal profit,*

* To those, who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God", it may be a paradox to say, that believers may rejoice when called, in providence, to endure afflictive tryals; looking upon them as proofs of the love and kindness of their heavenly father, and his using a wise and proper means with them to promote their advantage. But this is a truth plainly and particularly revealed in the gospel of Christ. Says the apostle James, chap. 5. ver. 11. "Behold, we count them happy which endure". And again, chap. 1. ver. 2. "Brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations". And why? The reason follows in the next words, "knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience"; and, as another apostle expresses it, Rom. 5. 4, 5. "patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the holy Ghost".—There is no school, like that of affliction, to train up christians to a "meetness" for heavenly glory, in its highest degrees. And, among those who "name the name of Christ", there are ordinarily none so eminent for their meekness; patience; humility; contempt of the world; the lively actings of faith, hope, trust in God, and a profound submission of soul to his alwise, righteous, holy and sovereign pleasure, as those who have passed thro' the heaviest tryals. Twas with a special view to their making eminent proficiency in

these,

and may "know that all things shall work together for our good", as they do for their's who "love God, and are the called according to his purpose". In fine, we may now have confidence towards God in the hour of death, and triumph in the prospect of those immortal joys, which the father of mercies has provided, and laid up in heaven, for all true believers in his son.

GOD grant we may all so "believe in him whom God hath sent", as to enjoy inward ease & peace while we live, and to be in the exercise of an assured hope, when we are called to depart hence, of going to be eternally happy in the kingdom of God, and of Jesus Christ! AMEN.

SERMON

these, and the like christian graces, and to give opportunity, and occasion, for throwing them out into exemplary acts, that God, in order to their "greater reward in heaven", put them upon enduring these things, which, "for the present, were not joyous, but grievous". Those good christians, who suffer most here, are commonly those, who shall be most happy hereafter. Not but that believers may "adorn" their profession, and "the doctrine of their Savior", in a prosperous state. Hence that remark in the book of the Acts, chap. 9. ver. 31. "Then had the churches *rest*,— *and were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost*". Neither the "truth of faith", nor "the comfort of it", are confined to a suffering condition in this world: Tho' "suffering with Christ" is the more common way to glory; and those, who have been most tried with sufferings, are ordinarily those who are best prepared for the brightest crown, in the heavenly and eternal world. Our author best knows, how far what is here said, will consist with his notion of "the sufferings, good christians are called to pass thro'." I have given above, as I imagine, a true and just representation of the gospel-account of them.

SERMON VI.

The Place and Uſe of Faith, in the Affair of Juſtification.

GALATIANS II. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt"—.

I HAVE already, in ſeveral diſcourſes from this text, endeavoured to let you into the true meaning of the faith that is connected with juſtification. What I now principally deſign is, to point out to you the "reaſon" of this connection, or to lead you into the ſcripture-notion of the proper "place", and "uſe", of faith in this buiſineſs of infinite importance to us all.

In order whereto, it will be needful to obſerve, that ſeveral things are particularly mentioned, in the ſacred books, as bearing their part in the

affair of the ſinner's juſtification ; each of which have their " diſtinct uſe", and are, in their " proper place", abſolutely neceſſary in order to our partaking of this bleſſed privilege. The firſt, relates to " God" ; the ſecond, to " Chriſt" ; and the third, to " ourſelves".

THE firſt thing to be conſidered in the affair of juſtification, and that indeed which gave riſe to it, is the " grace of God", his free favor, good will and kindneſs towards men. The infinitely benevolent being was not excited, either to purpoſe, or contrive, or reveal, or execute the goſpel-plan of ſalvation, by any motive extraneous to himſelf. Meer goodneſs was the ſource, and the only one, from whence it originated. Even the blood of Chriſt was of no conſideration, in a way of motive or argument, to perſuade the bleſſed God hereto. For the intervening mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, and all that he did and ſuffered on earth, or is now doing in heaven, are to be looked upon as *means* only in the execution of the purpoſed ſcheme of redemption ; not the incentive that prompted the all-merciful God to come into it. This is the point of view in which the ſcripture repreſents the matter. The gift of Chriſt to become incarnate, and humble himſelf to death, even the death of the croſs, is ſpoken of as the great aſtoniſhing inſtance of the moving of God's heart in compaſſion towards ſinners. To this it was owing, that he ſent his ſon Jeſus into our world, to ſuſtain and execute the office of its Savior. The new-teſtament is particularly expreſs upon this point. " In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten ſon into the world, that we

we might live thro' him". * And again, "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life". † The language, in theſe texts, is emphatically ſtrong, and does, in the fulleſt manner, expreſs the original eſſential benevolence of God; aſcribing it to this, as the true and only ſpring, that Chriſt was ſent into the world, "not to condemn the world, but that the world thro' him might be ſaved". Had he not been moved by the infinite goodneſs of his own nature, he would neither have purpoſed, or contrived this wonderful expedient for our everlaſting benefit: It proceeded from love, antecedently to all conſiderations whatever. And to the ſame love it was owing, that this ſcheme, when purpoſed and contrived, was revealed to Adam, to Abraham, to Moſes, to the Prophets, and more fully, in the times of the goſpel, to the Apoſtles, and thro' them to the whole world. The inſpired Paul therefore ſays, "we are juſtified freely of God's grace". ‡ And, ſpeaking of juſtification, he calls it a "free gift"; "the gift by grace"; "the gift" emphatically; and again, "the free gift". § And he might, with all propriety, ſpeak of it in this language; for it is, in regard of its original ſource, an abſolutely free favor. We were indeed, in the eye of God, "without ſtrength", "enemies", "ungodly", "ſinners", when he purpoſed and contrived the goſpel-method of juſtification. Grace therefore, and that only, could be the excitement to it.

I NEED not now ſay, that faith, in this view of juſtification, is of no uſe, of no influence, in any

 ſenſe

* 1 John 4. 9. † John 3. 16. ‡ Rom. 3. 24.
§ Rom. 5. 15, 16.

ſenſe whatever. The part it has to act is ſubſequent to, and wholly dependant on, the grace of God, that grace of his, which, previous to all conſideration of faith, works, or worthineſs, in any kind or ſhape, made this bleſſed privilege an obtainable one ; and this,for all ſorts of ſinners : for the openly prophane, the hypocritically devout, the ſtupidly tho'tleſs, the hardened in infidelity and an univerſal debauchery of manners, as well as others leſs odious and guilty. It was indeed, while viewing ſinners in all their various degrees of ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs, that the infinitely good God found within himſelf an heart, diſpoſing him to purpoſe and reveal the merciful plan, in conſequence of which they might obtain the juſtification of life.

The next thing, in the affair of juſtification, relates to "Chriſt". For the ſcripture not only declares, that we are "juſtified *freely* by God's grace", but "thro' the redemption that is in JeſusChriſt".* We are accordingly ſaid to "have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins" ;† and to be "juſtified by his blood".‡ And "his blood", which "declares God to be juſt in being the juſtifier of the ſinner", is emphatically mentioned as one of the great truths,which are the object of that faith that is accompanied with a juſtified ſtate. § In agreement with theſe apoſtolic repreſentations, "the gift by grace" is ſaid to be "by the one man, Jeſus Chriſt".‖ And "by the righteouſneſs of this one man, the free gift is come upon all men to the juſtification of life".¶ —But I have no need to multiply texts. Tis

* Rom. 3. 24. † Eph. 1. 7. ‡ Rom. 5. 9.
§ Rom. 3. 25, 26. ‖ Rom. 5. 15. ¶ Ver. 18.

Tis abundantly evident, from the general run of the new-teſtament-writings, that our bleſſed Savior Jeſus Chriſt, while in our world, "in faſhion as a man", and "form of a ſervant", both did and ſuffered every thing that was neceſſary in order to a WORTHINESS, a RIGHTEOUSNESS, on account of which God might, in conſiſtency with the honor of his perfections, and the authority of his law and government, manifeſt his mercy towards ſinners, even the chief of them, in ſaving them from wrath, and admiting them to the joys of his preſence in the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, this righteouſneſs of Chriſt, in the reflection on which he could appeal to his heavenly father, ſaying, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do"; and thereupon pray, "now, O father, glorifie thou me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was": * I ſay, this finiſhed work of Chriſt is that, with a view to which, for the ſake of which, in conſideration of which, the ſinner is juſtified and ſaved. This is the expedient, this the moral mean, the wiſdom of God, excited by his infinite benevolence, has contrived for the righteous and holy diſplay of his grace towards the ſinful ſons of men, in diſcharging them from the demands of his law and juſtice. And whoever are made partakers of this grace, the obedience of Chriſt, and eminently that finiſhing act of it, his willingly ſubmiting to die on the croſs, is the only meritorious ground of its beſtowment. Tis not for the ſake "of any thing the ſinner has about him" that he is acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favor. This is done by grace, thro' the atoning blood of Jeſus

* John 17. 4, 5.

Chriſt. The true reaſon of it is to be fetched from that aſtoniſhing love, which gave the only begotten ſon of God, that ſinful men might be ſaved from periſhing, and this in a way that would be honorary to that glorious being, who is as juſt and holy, as he is good and merciful.

'Tis now eaſy to ſee, that juſtification, as it reſpects Chriſt, whoſe character was perfect, and the only one that was ſo, and, as ſuch, well pleaſing to God, excludes even faith, as well as works, from being, in whole, or in part, the CONSIDERATION upon which the ſinner is freed from the curſe of the law, and inſtated in a right to eternal life. Chriſt's work was finiſhed on the croſs, and needed neither faith, or any thing elſe that could be found in, or done by, us, to render it more compleat, as a reaſon for juſtifying the ſinner, than it would be without them. Faith therefore, tho' neceſſary in order to juſtification, and tho' it operates to the obtainment of this privilege, is yet wholly uſeleſs, as the ground or reaſon of its beſtowment. This is a bleſſing, the grant of which was made ſolely with a view to Chriſt, and upon the account of his obedience, the laſt and greateſt act of which was, his making his "ſoul an offering for ſin".

THE laſt thing relating to juſtification is "faith", the ſcripture-connection of which, with this goſpel privilege I am now naturally bro't to make eaſy and familiar to you.

AND, in general, its office, from what has been already ſaid, muſt be conſidered as not only ſubſervient to grace and Chriſt, but as grounded on them,

them, ſubordinated to them, and receiving its virtue from them, in its whole operation. It has a quite different uſe from that, which the inſpired writers aſſign to the grace of God, and the atonement by Chriſt. For which reaſon, we ſhall entertain wrong ſentiments of its uſe, if we ſubſtitute it in the room of that which is alotted to either of the former; or ſo mix its uſe with their's, as to aſcribe to it the part which belongs to them, and not itſelf. The ſpecial operation of theſe ſeveral requiſites are preſerved diſtinct from each other, in the new-teſtament-books; which ever repreſent them as jointly concuring in the affair of juſtification, but yet in different and duly ſubordinated reſpects. Theſe requiſites muſt not therefore be miſplaced in our tho'ts, or the uſe of any one of them ſo confounded with the uſe of the other, as to break that harmonious wiſely ſubordinated order, in which the ſacred pen-men ſpeak of them as unitedly operating, tho' in different views, to the production of the ſame good effect. To be ſure, if we give faith the part of grace, or Chriſt; or ſo mingle it's uſe with their's, as to deſtroy its ſubſerviency to them, we ſhall groſly miſapprehend the matter, and incur the danger of transfering that glory to ourſelves, in the buiſineſs of juſtification, which is due only to God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Faith, as well as works, may be oppoſed to Chriſt in the affair of a ſinner's being juſtified; and ſhould we view it as the conſideration, in the virtue of which we are inſtated in this privilege, we ſhould be juſtly chargeable with that "eſtabliſhing our own righteouſneſs", in oppoſition to "the righteouſneſs of God", which is ſo frequently and preſſingly cautioned againſt by the apoſtle Paul.

For

For "if life could come by faith", in its own virtue, that is, as the conſideration entitling hereto, then is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt rendered needleſs, as truly as in the caſe of works, and he "died in vain".—But to come more directly to the point.

FAITH is connected with, and operates towards, the juſtification of life, as it is that character, mark, or qualification in us, without which we cannot, conformably to the goſpel-plan, be inſtated in the enjoyment of this benefit. * It is very

* What is here offered directly oppoſes the doctrine taught by our author. He tells us, pag. 96, "that if we imagine we poſſeſs, or deſire to attain to any REQUISITE to our acceptance with God, either aſide from, or in connection with, THE BARE WORK OF CHRIST,—Chriſt is become of no effect to us,—Chriſt will profit us nothing". This work of Chriſt, he accordingly calls "THE SOLE REQUISITE"; and gives it this name "with the more pleaſure, as it readily puts him in mind of that ſignificant ſaying of Jeſus, *one thing is needful*". This ſame tho't, in words of like import, he frequently, if not needleſly, repeats in all his letters. Upon which I would obſerve, by a REQUISITE, in order to juſtification, may be meant the meritorious ground of its beſtowment, the conſideration upon which, for the ſake of which, the ſinner becomes intereſted in it. In this ſenſe of the term, our author will not ſay, cannot with truth, or juſtice, ſay, that thoſe, he writes againſt, deny "*the work of Chriſt*" to be the SOLE REQUISITE, THE ONE THING NEEDFUL, in order to acceptance with God. They have ever taught this doctrine, and are indeed earneſt advocates for it, as one of the eſſential articles of the chriſtian faith. By a REQUISITE, may be meant alſo ſomething previous to the ſinner's actual intereſt in that "juſtification of life", which is the ſole procure-

ment

very expreſly, as well as frequently, declared, in the ſacred ſcriptures, that ſinners at large, ſinners without diſtinction or limitation, are not in a juſtified ſtate; and that neither the grace of God, or the atonement by Chriſt, operate, or were intended to operate, to the putting them into

ment of Chriſt; ſomething neceſſary to its beſtowment on this man, in diſtinction from another; ſomething, without which it can no more be thus beſtowed, than if it had not been purchaſed. And this is the ſenſe, in which our author muſt underſtand the term REQUISITE, if there is any meaning in the charges he would faſten upon the popular preachers. Upon any other ſuppoſition, his invectives againſt them are nothing more than railings againſt a phantom of his own imagination. Now, underſtanding the term REQUISITE in this only ſenſe, in which it was ever uſed by thoſe our author complains of, he has himſelf very often, however inconſiſtently, joined with them in ſpeaking the real truth upon this head. Tho' he has peremptorily made "the bare work of Chriſt" the SOLE REQUISITE to juſtification; yet, he has as peremptorily bro't in ANOTHER REQUISITE, that is, ſomething, without which no man, notwithſtanding "the work of Chriſt", ſhall ever be accepted of God. And he has often done this, and with as much freedom as thoſe he would repreſent as enemies to "the finiſht work of Chriſt". He has affirmed over and over again, in one place and another throughout his letters, that "the ſimple truth" (by which he means the ſame thing with "the bare work of Chriſt") muſt be *believed*, *poſſeſſed*, *become a truth to a man*; muſt be *a truth that he knows*, muſt *be found by him to be the truth*: Otherwiſe, it will be *no benefit to him*, *he can reap no comfort*, *no advantage from it*. If now tis neceſſary, we ſhould believe the truth, admit it into our minds as the truth, before we can be juſtified, this admiſſion of the truth into the mind, is as real a REQUISITE, in the ſenſe above explained, in order to juſtification, as the

into this ſtate, till ſuch a change has been wro't in them, as will juſtly give them a new and diſtinguiſhing character. Tis true, the infinitely good God, of his rich grace, has abſolutely made the gift of juſtification an obtainable one, by ſinners of whatever kind, be the degree of their vileneſs and guilt as great as can be ſuppoſed ; and tis true alſo, that the atoning blood of Chriſt, is a ſufficient moral ground or reaſon for the beſtowment of it upon them : But then, there is another truth as plainly revealed in the bible, which it highly concerns us all ſeriouſly to conſider, and this is, that juſtification does not proceed, either from the grace of God, or the obedience and blood of Chriſt, ſo as to prevent the damnation of any but thoſe, who poſſeſs a character which diſtinguiſhes them from ſinners in common. On the one hand, unbelieving impenitents, ſo living and ſo dying, inſtead of being delivered from the wrath

the truth itſelf : Nor can the ſinner be juſtified without the one, any more than without the other. And this indeed is the ſcripture-account of the matter. Tis as true as the expreſs declaration of the ſon of God can make it, " that he that believeth not", that admiteth not into his mind the goſpel as the truth of God, " ſhall be damned" : Nor will " the finiſht work of Chriſt" prevent it. To common underſtandings, that, I am ready to think, will appear a *requiſite*, without the actual being and exiſtence of which, damnation will be the reſult. If every one will certainly periſh, who don't believe the truth, in whoſe mind it don't exiſt as the truth, tis impoſſible " the truth ſimply in itſelf", meerly as ſuch, ſhould be the SOLE REQUISITE in order to life. Our author, if he pleaſes, may call it ſo ; but it will be a *ſole requiſite* of ſuch a peculiar ſort, as that, unleſs *another* is connected with it, we ſhall ſurely be made miſerable in the hell that *is* provided for unbelievers.

wrath of God, ſhall ſurely be " hurt of the ſecond death" : Nor will the grace of God, however infinite, or the obedience of Chriſt to the death of the croſs, however perfect and meritorious, be any ſecurity to them herefrom. For it is written, " he that believeth not, is condemned already".* And again," he that believeth not the ſon, ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him".† On the other hand, tis as clearly and peremptorily written, " whoſoever believeth in the only begotten ſon of God, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life" ; ‡ yea, it is written again, " he that believeth the ſon hath everlaſting life",§ hath it in actual poſſeſſion in the beginings of it. The ſinners therefore that are in a juſtified ſtate are thoſe only, who are diſtinguiſhed from others by being believers in Chriſt. Their faith gives them a diſcriminating character, which character is connected, by the appointment of God, with that deliverance from wrath, and right to life, which are the gift of grace thro' the atonement by Chriſt. They are, notwithſtanding this character, as viewed by the law, without relation to grace and Chriſt, in the ſame guilty undone condition with other ſinners, having no claim to mercy any more than they : But, taking into our view the connection God has been pleaſed, upon the plan of manifeſting his grace thro' the redemption there is in Chriſt, to conſtitute between this character, and a juſtified ſtate, it becomes a moſt intereſting one, and makes the difference between theſe and other ſinners as great, as the difference between a ſtate of freedom from wrath, and one of continual expoſedneſs to it.

THE

* John 3. 18. † Ver. 36. ‡ Ver. 16.
§ Ver. 36.

THE plain truth is, the juſtification of life, tho' the gift of God's grace, and his gift thro' the obedience of Chriſt to death, is no where, in the ſacred writings, ſaid to be beſtowed upon ſinners in common: Neither are the ſinners, upon whom it is beſtowed, pointed out by their names; but by this grand characteriſtic, "faith in JeſusChriſt". They are diſtinguiſhed from all others, by an appointed mark or ſign, "their believing in him whom God hath ſent". Upon whomſoever therefore this character is not found, they are liable to the curſe of the law, and the wrath of God, notwithſtanding the life and death of Jeſus the Savior; and they will accordingly be pronounced curſed, in the day of the appearing of that man, whom God has ordained judge of the world: But on whomſoever it is found, it may be aſſuredly ſaid of them, they are "the bleſſed ones whoſe ſins are forgiven, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity"; and to whom the redeemer and judge of men will ſay, "when he comes in the glory of his father, with the holy angels, come, ye bleſſed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". Not that they are thus favoured and diſtinguiſhed, upon the ſcore of their faith, for the ſake of their character as believers; but, having this character, they have the divinely conſtituted mark, pointing them out as the perſons, whom God has been pleaſed to declare, ſhall reap the benefit of that deliverance from wrath, the ſource of which is his own free grace, and the reaſon of its beſtowment, the worthineſs of Chriſt, his perfect character finiſhed on the croſs. Their faith is the inſtituted medium, by which they become intereſted in the redeemer,

mer, and the virtue of what he has done and ſuffered for ſinners. God has appointed a connection between faith, and the benefit of the Savior's obedience and blood; inſomuch, that what he has done and ſuffered is placed to the account of believers. His righteouſneſs is, to all ſaving purpoſes, the ſame thing to them, as if they had wro't it out themſelves.

Nor was this conſtituted connection between faith, and the benefit of God's grace, thro' the atonement of Chriſt, an arbitrary appointment; but a wiſely contrived part in the plan of redemption.

The apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of this matter, ſays, "it is therefore of faith, that it might be by grace".* And ſo far is faith from counter-acting the grace of God, or the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, in the buiſineſs of juſtification, that it highly exalts them both; aſcribing the glory to them, and not taking it to itſelf. The believer in Chriſt aſſents to it as true, that tis not for the ſake of any worthineſs he has about him, that he is juſtified and ſaved; but for the ſake of another, on account of the worthineſs of him, who has been "the propitiation for our ſins". He "receives it as a faithful ſaying, and accounts it worthy of all acceptation", that it was of grace that Chriſt was thus made a propitiation; as it was love, pure unmerited love, that ſent him into the world to do the work, which he finiſhed by dying on the croſs. And it equally ſtands true in his mind, that his faith is of no value in itſelf ſimply conſidered, and that it derives all its virtue from the appointment

* Rom. 4. 16.

appointment of heaven, which has made it a neceſſary qualification in him, in order to his partaking of the benefit of grace thro' Chriſt. And whoſoever believes thus, exalts the grace of God, and does honor to the redeemer's obedience and blood. His faith, tho' connected with life, totally excludes all boaſting. And, in truth, the connection was purpoſely made, that "no fleſh ſhould glory in God's preſence"; but that "he that glorieth might glory in the Lord"; as all believers do, being, by means of their faith, "in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is now made unto them, wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption." *

It ought to be conſidered ſtill further, it was a fit, proper thing, in point of true wiſdom, that there ſhould be a "ſubjective capacity" in the ſinner, for the enjoyment of the bleſſedneſs he will have an immediate right to by being juſtified, before he actually is ſo. Thoſe who are juſtified have an immediate actual right, not only to deliverance from wrath, but to the joys of God's preſence; inſomuch that, ſhould they be inſtantly called out of the world, they would be admited into heaven. But how incongruous would a right to heavenly happineſs be, where the temper and bent of the mind is ſuch, that there would be a total incapacity for the enjoyment of it? And yet, this would be the caſe, if faith was not previouſly neceſſary to our being veſted with this right. Tis this that makes the grand ſubjective alteration in the ſinner. He is no ſooner poſſeſſed of faith, but he has that ſeed of God in him, which contains in it, virtually, the whole chriſtian temper, which

* 1 Cor. 29, 30, 31.

which is the true ſcripture capacity for all ſpritual enjoyments and employments. He is now, in the firſt rudiments, a man of that "pure heart", and thoſe "clean hands", which fit him "to aſcend into the hill of the Lord, and to ſtand in his holy place", whether we mean hereby his ſanctuary on earth, or preſence in heaven. There is, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, a "meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſaints in light".* And it would be to little purpoſe to have a right to this inheritance, if we were, at the ſame time, incapable of enjoying it; not having been fitted herefor in the frame of our hearts. Such a right ought not to be ſuppoſed. And this ſhows the wiſdom of God in ſo contriving and revealing the method of juſtification, as that this goſpel privilege cannot be had without "the faith by which the juſt do live".

I MAY not impertinently add here, it is by faith, as enlivened and actuated by the holy Spirit, that "redemption thro' the blood of Chriſt, according to the riches of God's grace", is carried into effect. Faith, operating under the divine agency, forms the ſinner at firſt into "a babe in Chriſt"; and by the ſame faith, under the conduct of the ſame influence, he gradually grows to "the fullneſs of the ſtature of a perfect man in him". Says the apoſtle, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth".† Agreable whereto are thoſe words of another apoſtle, "being born again by the word of God".‡ And this ſame word of truth, by which the ſinner is "begot", and "born again", is ſtill made uſe of in carrying on this new workmanſhip of God, till it is "compleat in Chriſt". Says our Savior, "ſanctifie them thro'

* Col. 1. 12. † James 1. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. 1. 22.

thy truth, thy word is truth". * And the apoſtle Paul ſays of Chriſt, " he loved the church, and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctifie it by the word,—and preſent it to himſelf a glorious church without ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing". † You ſee it is by the truth, that the new creation is both begun, and carried on ; begun in the new-birth, and carried on in progreſſive ſanctification. But then it is to be remembered, it is by the truth as exiſting in the mind by faith. For if it lies in the bible only, and is not received into the heart, it can have no effect. By believing the truth, it has a real being in the chriſtian, and becomes capable of uſe as a principle of operation. And by the truth, thus exiſting & operating in him, he makes, under the guidance of the holy Ghoſt, all his attainments, in conformity to the image, example, and will of Jeſus Chriſt. Of ſuch importance and uſe is faith in the ſcheme of redeeming grace, thro' the blood of Chriſt. And no wonder therefore it is diſtinguiſhed, by being made the grand characteriſtic, without which we ſhall have no benefit, either by the life or death of Jeſus Chriſt.

The ſhort of the matter is, we can't be too much concerned, that grace and Chriſt may have all due honor in the affair of the ſinner's juſtification ; but, under the notion of magnifying grace, and exalting Chriſt, we muſt take care we don't reproach that wiſdom of God, which has ſo contriv'd the plan of life, as to make faith in us a neceſſary requiſite in order hereto. Grace, Chriſt, and faith, are all neceſſary ; and the latter as truly ſo, as the former, tho' in a different view. Without

* John 17. 17. † Eph. 5. 26, 27.

out grace, we ſhould never have heard of this goſpel privilege; without the worthineſs of Chriſt, his finiſhed character, as having been obedient even to death, there would not have been an adequate moral ground for the beſtowment of it; and without faith, we ſhould be wanting in that character, qualification, or diſtinctive mark, which the all-wiſe appointment of God has ſo connected with freedom from wrath, as that, while deſtitute of it, he has moſt ſolemnly declared, that we are in a ſtate of condemnation. Thus faith, tho' neceſſary, is made ſo in due ſubordination to the grace of God, and the perfectly meritorious obedience and blood of Jeſus Chriſt. There is a moſt beautiful and harmonious agreement in their reſpective operations, in order to our being put into a juſtified ſtate.

It will, perhaps, be ſaid, "Chriſt's work finiſhed "on the croſs, was the fulfilment of all righte- "ouſneſs. This gave him a character perfect in "itſelf, and perfectly pleaſing to God; and this "is the ſinner's juſtification: He is juſtified by "this, and nothing elſe. This obedience of "Chriſt to death is eminently, *the truth, the ſimple* "*truth, that juſtifies.*"

If I know my ſelf, I would always be in a diſpoſition to love and thank Chriſt, for the great and glorioufly benevolent work he finiſhed on the croſs; and next to the grace of God, it is, without all doubt, the grand requiſite to juſtification: Nor can we be juſtified without it. Tis an eſſential part in the merciful plan God has laid to ſave ſinners from the damnation of hell. And it would be baſe ingratitude to the bleſſed Jeſus, to

ſay any thing that would take from the glory due to him, when he has done and ſuffered ſo much, that we might be juſtified and ſaved in a way that might be honorary to the perfections and government of God. But ſtill, no truth of God, however great and important, ought to be explained ſo as to ſet aſide any other truth of his. Perfect harmony ſubſiſts among all divinely revealed truths. And if we interpret one, ſo as to oppoſe another, we may diſcover zeal for God or Chriſt, but it will be zeal without ſufficient knowledge. We can't do too much honor to the redeemer's blood, while we view it in the true point of revealed light: But if we would put it to a uſe it was never intended for, inſtead of honoring, we ſhall reproach it.

THE queſtion here is, not whether Chriſt has perfectly done the work aſſigned to him as mediator and Savior? This is thankfully acknowledged to be a moſt glorious truth. The queſtion is not, whether this work of his is eſſentially neceſſary in order to the ſinner's juſtification: This is readily owned alſo. There is no way in which we can eſcape wrath, there is no way in which we can obtain life, but by the obedience and blood of Jeſus Chriſt. Tis always with a view to him, for his ſake, and in conſideration of his work finiſhed in the days of Tiberius, that the ſinner is juſtified. But the true and only proper queſtion is, whether the ſinner, in conſequence of this finiſhed work of Chriſt, can be in a juſtified ſtate, without faith? If he can't, faith muſt have its uſe in the buiſineſs of juſtification; and is of ſuch uſe, that the ſinner will in vain expect juſtification without it.

THAT

THAT no ſinner ſhall ever enjoy the benefit of Chriſt's finiſhed work, who is not a believer in him, is a goſpel-truth; and it is as ſimple and plain a truth, as that Chriſt finiſhed his work by dying on the croſs. Few, it may be, will venture to deny this. If any ſhould be diſpoſed to do ſo, it would be ſufficient to confront ſuch denyal with thoſe words, our Savior commiſſioned his apoſtles to preach to all the world, "he that believeth not ſhall be damned"; * or thoſe ſimilar ones, which he preached himſelf, "he that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten ſon of God". † If theſe words contain any real meaning, no man can be juſtified by any truth, call it ſimple, complex, or what you will, while he is an unbeliever in Chriſt. And to ſay otherwiſe, would be boldly to contradict the expreſs declaration of him, thro' whom we muſt be juſtified, if this is ever our happy caſe.

SHOULD it be ſaid, faith indeed is neceſſary; but then, by faith muſt be underſtood "the truth believed". ‡ Tis not our belief, but "what we

 believe",

* Mark 16. 16. † John 3. 18.

‡ This is the PROTON PSEUDOS, the capital miſtake, our author has unhappily fallen into. It runs thro' all his letters, and is mingled more or leſs with all that he ſays. Tis, to me, quite ſtrange, one of his diſcernment ſhould not at once ſee, that he impoſed on himſelf, and his readers, in ſpeaking of "the truth to be believed", and the "belief of this truth", as one and the ſame thing. Surely, there is a difference between "light", and "ſeeing" light. And the difference is as real, and as obviouſly to be perceived, between the "object of faith", and the "mind's perſuaſion"

believe", that juſtifies. The anſwer is eaſy. Neither the truth, nor our belief of it, do juſtifie apart from each other : Or, to ſpeak in more explicit words, the ſinner is put into a juſtified ſtate, neither

ſuaſion" with reference to this object. Tis readily acknowledged, when a man gives credit to the goſpel-report, he becomes " poſſeſſed of the truth" ; yea, I will add, the truth he poſſeſſes, if he unerringly believes, will lie in his mind juſt as it ſtands in the divine record. But, is the truth's lying in his mind by faith, and its lying in the divine record *only*, the ſame thing ? There is an eſſential difference here ; inſomuch, that contradictory propoſitions, and the moſt intereſting ones too, may juſtly be affirmed of the ſame truth, in theſe different views of it. Damnation, aggavated damnation, may follow upon the " ſalutary truth", ſimply or meerly as ſuch ; that is, abſtracted from the perſuaſion of a man's mind, that tis the truth ; whereas, whoſoever believes the truth, or becomes poſſeſſed of it by faith, ſhall aſſuredly obtain " the juſtification of life". What now ſhould be the reaſon of this difference ? The true and only reaſon is, becauſe the truth, as to its MODE OF EXISTENCE, if I may ſo ſpeak, is eſſentially different from what it was. Before the ſinner's belief of it, it was " meerly the propoſed object of faith" ; but it is now " this object admited into his mind". And in this view only of the truth, is it connected, in the bible, with any ſaving benefit. Tis not the truth, in itſelf ſimply conſidered, but AS BELIEVED, received into the mind by faith, that will avail to acceptance with God. Faith therefore, or THE TRUTH ACTUALLY BELIEVED, is as real a requiſite in order to life, as the TRUTH ITSELF. They both bear their part, and unitedly concur, in the affair of the ſinner's juſtification. This way of ſpeaking, perfectly falls in with the whole tenor of the new-teſtament-writings, upon this head. What they ſay of faith, and its connection with life, thus conſidered, is intelligible in itſelf, and eaſy to be underſtood by any vulgar capacity : Whereas, " if we

neither by his faith, ſeparate from the obedience and blood of Chriſt; nor by the blood and obedience of Chriſt, ſeparate from his faith. They both of them have their part, and uſe, in this

 buſineſs;

we would enter into the ſpirit of our author's writings, upon this head, or read them with any ſatisfaction, we muſt have a new dictionary for ſome of the moſt notable words of the new-teſtament"; as he expreſſes himſelf upon another occaſion, pag. 377. And, even then, we ſhould be at a loſs to make out a conſiſtency in what he ſays. Sometimes tis *the truth*, the *ſimple truth*, the *ſalutary truth*, the *ſaving truth*, that juſtifies; at other times tis *faith*, *belief*, the *belief of the truth*, the *knowledge of the truth*, the *knowledge of a righteouſneſs finiſhed in the days of Tiberius*: By all which phraſes, if he would not be at odds with himſelf, he muſt mean one and the ſame thing. And yet, tis impoſſible, according to any known rules of language, that the *ſimple truth*, the *ſaving truth*, without any adjunct, ſhould be underſtood in the ſame ſenſe preciſely, with the ſame words joined with *belief* or *knowledge*. If theſe additional words ſignifie nothing, why are they uſed? If they ſignifie any thing, why uſed as tho' they meant nothing? The truth is, it was neceſſary our author ſhould, every now and then, bring in the words *faith*, *belief of the truth*, *knowing the truth*, and the like; becauſe, otherwiſe, he would too viſibly have thrown contempt on the ſacred books, in which the uſe of them is both common, and infinitely intereſting. But do they uſe them, in the ſenſe he underſtands them? No: But as pointing out, and directly aiming to point out, a REAL AND ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE between the truth conſidered "as the object of faith", and this object AS BELIEVED, actually admited into the mind. Nor is the new-teſtament doctrine, concerning faith, intelligible, upon any other plan of interpretation. It certainly is not upon our author's. I ſhall briefly illuſtrate this, by one or two inſtances.—The apoſtle Peter profeſſes, in the name of the other apoſtles, as well as his own, John 6. 69. "we believe, and are

ſure,

buiſineſs ; nor can it be accompliſhed without their joint concurence : Tho' the uſe of the former is dependant on the latter, ſubſervient to it, and valuable only by derivation from it.

'TWOULD

ſure, that thou art Chriſt, the ſon of the living God". The ſcripture ſimply affirms, " that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the ſon of the living God". I would now aſk, is there no difference between this profeſſion, and affirmation ? Tis obvious, at the firſt glance, that the " affirmation" contains the truth " meerly as ſuch", & nothing elſe. And tis as plain, that the " profeſſion", beſides this, takes in another idea quite diſtinct, & different ; and that is, the " exiſtence of this truth in the minds of the apoſtles". And I would add here, " the perſuaſion of their minds", with reference to this truth, was as truly neceſſary, tho' not in the ſame view, to denominate their profeſſion acceptable in God's ſight, as " the truth itſelf" that was the object of this perſuaſion. They both concured in the matter ; nor, without this concurence, would their profeſſion have been of any ſignificancy to any ſpiritual purpoſe.— The ſcripture declares, " that Chriſt is the only begotten ſon of God, whom he ſent into the world that ſinners might live, and not die". It declares likewiſe, " that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in God's only begotten ſon, ſhall not die, but live". Upon comparing theſe declarations, will any one deliberately ſay, that the " latter" means no more than the " former" ? That they both convey, and were intended to convey, the ſame ideas ? If an infinitely intereſting difference can't be diſcovered between them, it muſt be owing to the want of ſight, and not becauſe it is not as clearly and diſtinctly expreſſed, as words can do it. Upon our author's ſcheme, no one can give a meaning to any of thoſe texts, which connect ſalvation with faith. He is himſelf quite unequal to the difficult taſk. He is accordingly led, whether ſenſible of it, or not, to confute himſelf, even while illuſtrating his grand point, namely, that tis by " the ſimple truth", the truth that is " the object of faith", and by nothing in connection

with

'Twould be to no purpoſe to plead here, "as Chriſt and his apoſtles ſpeak of faith and the truth indifferently, to be juſtified by faith, is to be juſtified by the truth, * that is, to be juſtified by

with it, that the ſinner is juſtified. Says he, pag. 11. "what Chriſt hath done, is that which pleaſeth God; "what he hath done, is that which quiets the guilty "conſcience, ſo ſoon as HE KNOWS IT: So that "whenever he hears of it, he has no occaſion for any "other queſtion but this, is it true? IF HE FINDS IT "TRUE, he is happy; if not, he can reap no comfort "by it". Tis at once obvious, that he here makes a DIFFERENCE between "what Chriſt hath done that is pleaſing to God", and a man's KNOWING or BELIEVING this; between "the truth itſelf", and HIS FINDING IT TO BE TRUE: That is, in plain words, he would give us to underſtand, tho' tis true, that "what Chriſt has done, is pleaſing to God"; yet, if a man does not KNOW this to be true, if it is not A TRUTH TO HIM, as well as a truth in itſelf, he can reap no comfort by it. And what is this, in reality of ſenſe, but to ſay, juſt as others do, that what Chriſt did, however pleaſing to God, will be of no ſaving advantage to any man, unleſs he has faith, that is, is perſuaded in his mind, that this which is ſpoken of, as truth, in the divine record, really is ſo. There are many other paſſages, in which our author makes as great a DIFFERENCE between the truth "merely in itſelf", and "as poſſeſſed by faith", as others do; and this too, while he is proving there is no difference at all. In ſhort, none have more groſly "put the change upon themſelves, by ſhifting words and names, than he has done in this matter", if I may return him his own compliment.

* Tis readily granted, that faith is ſometimes uſed in ſcripture to mean the object of faith, in which ſenſe "faith", and "the truth", ſignifie the ſame thing. But whenever it is thus uſed, tis in a figurative and leſs proper ſenſe. Should we interpret faith, or belief, as

by faith is to be juſtified by Chriſt's blood which is the truth" : It would ſignifie nothing, I ſay, to argue thus, for tho' faith and the truth are ſometimes promiſcuouſly uſed, tis in the figurative ſenſe, and not ſtrictly and properly. The aſſent of a man's mind to revealed truth, is a quite

as always ſignifying the object of faith, or, what our author calls " the ſimple truth", we ſhould, at once, ſtrip a great number of texts of all meaning. I ſhall briefly mention one or two by way of ſpecimen. When our Savior preached, ſaying, " believe the goſpel" ; if, by believing is underſtood the object of faith, that is, " the goſpel", what imaginable ſenſe can be put upon his words ? I freely acknowledge my own incapacity to give them any : Whereas, if we explain them as a call to his hearers to aſſent to " the goſpel" which he preached, to admit it into their minds as the truth of God, there is, at once, an eaſy and important meaning given to them. In like manner, when the apoſtles preached, as they were commiſſioned to do, " he that believeth ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned" ; we ſhall meet with the ſame difficulty, in affixing any ſenſe to what they ſaid. If belief ſtands here to ſignifie preciſely the ſame thing with " the ſimple truth", the object of faith, no man alive can paraphraſe the words ſo as to make them ſpeak ſenſe. If it be ſaid, the phraſes, " he that believeth", and " he that believeth not", are to be interpreted, as pointing out thoſe, who admit the object of faith, " the ſimple truth", into their minds, and thoſe who do not ; this, it is owned, gives a ſenſe, and an highly important one, to them ; and it is the very ſenſe that is intended to be conveyed by them : But tis not poſſible, this ſenſe, or indeed any other, ſhould be put upon them, if belief means exactly the ſame thing with " the truth ſimply in itſelf". I ſhall ſubjoin here, notwithſtanding what has been ſaid above, perhaps, in moſt of the places, if not in all, where we are ſaid to be " juſtified by faith", and not by

quite different thing from the truth itſelf, that is the object of his aſſent. It becomes indeed a truth to him by this aſſent; but ſtill, the truth itſelf, and that perſuaſion of mind, in conſequence of which it exiſts in him, in this point of view, are diſtinct things. That Chriſt "died for ſin, the juſt for the unjuſt"; is a truth plainly teſtified to in the ſcripture, and will be a truth, whether it be admited into my mind as ſuch, or not; but it muſt be thus admited, it muſt ſtand true in my mind, or I can have no ſaving benefit from it. That we are "juſtified by Chriſt's blood", is one of the moſt important revealed truths; but I muſt believe it, it muſt be a truth in my mind, before I can be juſtified by it. To be "juſtified by faith", and to be "juſtified by Chriſt's blood", can't therefore mean preciſely the ſame thing: Nor ought they ever to be ſo explained; but as jointly concuring

by "the works of the law", we are to underſtand by "faith", the "goſpel", in oppoſition to "law". So, when we are ſometimes ſaid to be "juſtified by faith", where "law" is not particularly mentioned, the meaning may be the ſame, namely, that we are "juſtified" upon the foot of "goſpel", upon the "ſcheme of mercy revealed by Jeſus Chriſt". But then it ought carefully to be minded, we cannot, in conſiſtency with many expreſs texts of ſcripture, be "juſtified upon the goſpel-plan", but by "believing" in the ſtrict proper ſenſe of the word, that is, by admiting this plan into our minds as the truth of God. Tis as ſure a truth of "the faith of Jeſus Chriſt", meaning hereby his goſpel, that we ſhall be "damned if we don't believe", as it is that "he died for our offences, and roſe again for our juſtification". The "truth as it is in Jeſus" muſt be admited into our minds, and exiſt a reality there, or we ſhall receive no advantage either from his death, or reſurrection.

ing with each other. On the one hand, to be "juſtified by Chriſt's blood", if interpreted in conſiſtency with other ſacred texts, will mean the ſame thing with being "juſtified by faith in his blood", including both the truth, and our faith in it; for they are both neceſſary. Both the blood of Chriſt, and its being true in the ſinner's mind that he has ſhed his blood, muſt concur in order to his being juſtified. On the other hand, "to be juſtified by faith", if explained in a juſt conſiſtency with other inſpired texts, will mean, not only that the truth believed, Chriſt's blood, is neceſſary to juſtification, ſo neceſſary that tis not obtainable without it; but that the perſuaſion of mind with reference to this truth, ſignified by faith, has its uſe alſo; inſomuch, that where this is wanting, even the blood of Chriſt will not avail to ſave the ſinner from going to hell. Says the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of himſelf, and other believers, "knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt". Surely, his meaning, in theſe words, is not, that the object of faith only is neceſſary in order to juſtification. If faith, underſtanding by it, the mind's perſuaſion with reference to Jeſus Chriſt, and his finiſhed work, was of no uſe, of no ſervice, in the buiſineſs of the ſinner's juſtification, why does he ſay with ſo much particularity, "we have believed that we might be juſtified"? Their believing inChriſt was a needleſs thing, to be ſure it was ſo reſpecting their juſtification, if they might have been juſtified without this belief.

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THE queſtion is ſhort, but the true anſwer to it will, as I imagine, be deciſive in this matter. It is neceſſary, in order to the ſinner's being juſtified, that goſpel-truth ſhould exiſt in his mind as the truth of God ? If it is not, tis a vain amuſement to talk, or write, about knowing the truth, believing the truth. If it is neceſſary, if the truth, the ſimple truth, muſt be admited into his mind, received by faith, then he can't be juſtified by the truth ſimply in itſelf. There muſt be the concurence of faith ; that is to ſay, it muſt be by this truth, not as lying in the ſacred books, but as admited into the heart. And if the truth juſtifies in this ſenſe, it muſt be by ſome divine appointment, conſtituting a connection betweenthe truth in this view of it, and the ſinner's being juſtified. He can be juſtified in no other way. Joy may naturally ſpring up in his heart, upon his believing the goſpel-report of a method in which "God may be juſt, and yet juſtifie the ungodly" ; as "the great guns of a neighbouring caſtle may give pleaſure, by intimating ſome public occaſion of joy". But the truth of the goſpel, however ſtrongly believed, can't, in a way of meer natural operation, or indeed by any ſupernatural aſſiſtance, put the ſinner into a juſtified ſtate. It may, under the influence of the divine ſpirit, operate to change his heart, to change the objects of his paſſions and affections, and to renew his whole inner and outer-man : But it can do nothing towards his juſtification. For the change which juſtification makes in the ſinner is relative, not real. It changes him from an object of wrath to an object of God's favor. It puts him into a ſtate wherein he has a right to life, inſtead of being obnoxious

obnoxious to death. And there is no way in which this can be done but by a divine conſtitution. And if, according to this conſtitution, a belief of the truth is neceſſary, then the truth ſeparate, or apart, from this belief, can't do it; but they do it in concurence with each other. So God has made the connection between believed truth, and a juſtified ſtate. And to talk of being juſtified by the truth, in any other view of it but this, which God has appointed and revealed, is really deluſive, to ſay nothing worſe.

IT may be further objected, if by faith, in the buiſineſs of juſtification, any thing is meant beſides the obedience and blood of Chriſt, the truth believed, then, in order to our being juſtified, we muſt be poſſeſſed of ſome qualification or requiſite, diſtinguiſhing us from other ſinners; to ſuppoſe which would be diſhonorary to the "work of Chriſt finiſhed on the croſs", as tho' it was not of itſelf ſufficient, but needed ſomething in us to make it ſo.

I ANSWER; tis impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, we ſhould be believers, and not be poſſeſſed of a qualification or character, diſtinguiſhing us from unbelievers. Faith in the only begotten ſon of God ſtamps a character, and the greateſt and moſt intereſting one too, upon the ſubjects of it. They are now quite different men from what they were. They have upon them that mark of God, which diſcriminates them from all other ſinners in the world. Nor can they be juſtified, unleſs they have this diſcriminating mark,

or

or character. * This we have ſeen to be as evident a truth as any in the ſacred books of ſcripture. And if God has revealed this as a goſpel-truth, for any to ſay, that diſhonor is hereby reflected on the obedience and blood of Chriſt, is, in reality of conſtruction, to reproach God.

And

* Our author will, doubtleſs, eſteem it highly heretical in any to ſay, that a real difference in men's character muſt take place before they can be juſtified; and that they are juſtified in this point of view, that is, as being poſſeſſed of a character which makes an eſſential difference between them, and ſinners in common: But this is undoubtedly the truth; nor otherwiſe could they be juſtified upon the goſpel-plan. If the expreſs words of revelation are worth minding, tis beyond all diſpute evident, that no man can be in a ſtate of acceptance with God, till he is a BELIEVER. And it is as evident, if words are any thing more than unmeaning words, that a man's being a believer DISTINGUISHES him from all that are not, and fixes an ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE between his character, and their's. Men's being believers, or unbelievers, is indeed the GRAND DISTINCTION, the ſcripture makes between them; and it is ſo intereſting, that ſalvation or damnation depend upon it. Our author is pleaſed to ſay page 287. "that the goſpel conſiders all whom it relieves as guilty and unworthy, deſtitute of righteouſneſs and every qualification and recommendation, perfectly on a level with all their fellow-creatures, and ſeeing no difference betwixt themſelves and thoſe that eternally periſh —When it firſt ſpeaks peace to them, it intimates no difference betwixt them and others". If he had been ſpeaking here of ſinners, as they were viewed by God, when he purpoſed, contrived and revealed the goſpel-method of life, tis readily own'd they were all deſtitute of every qualification, and without diſtinction the children of wrath. It was "while they were ſinners", and as ſuch deſerving death, that "God commended his love to-

wards

And it would indeed be a reproach to Chriſt alſo, to introduce his blood as operating to the ſinner's juſtification, in a way that God has not appointed. "The fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men"; and "the wiſdom of this world" is always found, in the end, to be fooliſhneſs with God". If God has

wards them", in opening the goſpel-ſcheme of hope. But to ſay, that there is no difference between the *character* of "thoſe that eternally periſh", & thoſe that are "relieved by the goſpel", at the ſame time when "it ſpeaks peace to them", and that it "intimates no difference betwixt them", is groſly and boldly to contradict the ſacred writers of the new-teſtament. Can a man, upon the foot of the goſpel-revelation, be relieved and comforted, while an unbeliever in Jeſus Chriſt? If he can, he may have relief, and enjoy comfort, at the very time he is actually in a ſtate of damnation; for the ſcripture directly affirms, John 3. 36. "he that believeth not the ſon,—the wrath of God abideth on him". But if tis neceſſary he ſhould believe, before he can be relieved and comforted, he muſt then be a *different* man from what he was, and ſo different as to differ from all unbelievers in the world. God views him in this light, when he ſpeaks peace to him; and he muſt view himſelf as God does, or he can find no relief upon the foundation of Chriſt and the apoſtles. Tis true, a man, when he becomes a believer, will ſee his own unworthineſs and ſinfulneſs, in a far ſtronger light than he did before; inſomuch that he will be filled with admiration at the infinitely rich grace of God in contriving and revealing a way, wherein ſuch a guilty undeſerving creature ſhould be admited to mercy: and he will alſo ſee, in the like ſtrong point of light, that tis not in the virtue of his being a believer, that he may comfort himſelf in hope: He will look beyond every thing in himſelf, to "the work of Chriſt", as the true reaſon, the ſole meritorious ground, upon which he is accepted of God. But ſtill, he muſt view himſelf, not ſimply as

has made it neceſſary, that the ſinner ſhould be a believer, that is, a different man from what he was, and from what all other men are, before he ſhall be juſtified, or, what means the ſame thing, before he ſhall reap ſaving benefit by the obedience and blood of Chriſt, we ſhall give all due

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as a ſinner, but a *believing* ſinner, and in this reſpect *different* from ſinners in common, or he can find no relief from the goſpel of Chriſt. It may argue our author's being groſly inconſiſtent with himſelf to ſay, that he no more than thoſe he treats with contempt, will allow any man to be relieved by the goſpel, till there is a wide difference between him and other ſinners; and yet, this is the real truth. He ſays, page 286. "the ſcripture will keep us in countenance, if we ſhould affirm, that no man *before he believes* can have any ground of hope, but what is fictitious and vain". And, in the next page, "there can be no true piety nor good hope, but what *follows upon faith*". Faith then, our author being judge, is previous to, and muſt neceſſarily go before, piety and hope, or they will both be falſe and vain. And a man's relief from the goſpel will be like his piety and hope, a vain imagination, unleſs it is preceded by faith. And, as our author makes hope, comfort, and indeed every thing, in real chriſtianity, to *follow* upon faith; ſo does he make the man that has faith, a *quite different* man from what he was, and from all unbelievers whatever. According to his mode of ſpeaking, no man can be a believer, ſo as to be ſavingly relieved, to whom "the work of Chriſt" is not "the truth"; who don't "find it to be the truth"; who don't "poſſeſs, know and underſtand it": Nor can a man either poſſeſs, know, or underſtand it, if it don't inſpire him "with love to it", a love that will ſhew its reality in all inſtances of "ſelf-deny'd obedience": Yea, no man can know the truth in whom it is not "a principle of life", analagous to that which denominated Lazarus one alive from the dead. If this is

honor to this "finiſhed work" of his, while we conſider it as available to the juſtification of the believing ſinner only. We now give it its proper uſe, and ſhould diſgrace, rather than honor it, ſhould we extend its uſe, and attribute a ſufficiency to it to a purpoſe God never deſigned it for.

THE plain truth is, God's making faith, in us, previouſly neceſſary to our receiving ſaving benefit by Chriſt's obedience and blood, is the contrivance of infinite wiſdom; and, far from eclipſing the glory due to Chriſt, it is the beſt conceivable method, by which he might have the whole glory aſcribed to him that is his due, in the great affair of the ſinner's juſtification. For let it be conſidered, it is by faith that the ſinner beholds himſelf, in the ſtrongeſt point of light, as an undone wretch, unworthy of the divine notice,

> a juſt account of one that is a believer, muſt he not be a quite *different* man from what he was? Can it, with the leaſt ſhadow of truth, be ſaid, that there is no diſtinction between his character, and their's who will finally periſh? Is there no difference between the man, "into whoſe mind God has ſhined with the light of his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt", and thoſe blinded ſinners, who ſtill "ſit in darkneſs, and the region of the ſhadow of death"? Is there no difference between the man, who has had planted in his heart, by the power of the holy Ghoſt, "a principle of life", and thoſe, concerning whom the ſcripture ſays, "they are dead while they live"? One muſt put out his eyes not to ſee an eſſential difference between believers and others, as to their real character. Our author ſometimes plainly ſaw, and as plainly deſcribed, this difference; tho', at other times, he keeps it out of ſight, and ſpeaks as tho' there was no difference at all.

notice, and a fit object of wrath. It is by faith, that the only way is opened to his view, wherein God may ſhew mercy to him, and at the ſame time diſcover himſelf to be glorious, both in his holineſs and juſtice. It is by faith, he is kept from aſcribing his deliverance from wrath and hell to his own deſerts, and is diſpoſed and influenced to carry his tho'ts up to the riches of divine grace, as the true ſource of this bleſſing, and the perfect character of Jeſus Chriſt, compleated by his death, as the true reaſon of its beſtowment. Tho' he is in a juſtified ſtate, his faith teaches him, with adoring humility and thankfulneſs, to acknowlege that he was bro't into it "freely of God's grace, thro' the redemption there is in Chriſt". His faith won't ſuffer him to look upon faith in any view, but that of a divinely appointed medium of putting him into the enjoyment of a bleſſing, which was wholly owing to the grace of God, and the redeemer's worthineſs. His faith inſtructs and enables him to argue, I am, being a believer, an object of the divine favor; but I became ſo, not in the virtue of this character, not for the ſake of it, but becauſe the good God was pleaſed of his meer grace to connect this character with the benefit of his ſon's blood. His faith directs him, notwithſtanding his being a believer, to eſteem himſelf, comparing himſelf with law and juſtice, as a ſinner in common with the reſt of mankind, and worthy of nothing but the divine wrath; and to attribute it to meer mercy, that his faith, by the goſpel-conſtitution, intereſts him in the everlaſting advantages that reſult from the obedience of Chriſt to the death of the croſs. This is the influence of faith. And wherein could

God have contrived a more effectual method to ſecure to himſelf, the honor of his own grace; and to his ſon Jeſus Chriſt the honor of his work as redeemer, than by making it neceſſary, that the ſinner ſhould be a believer, previous to his obtaining the juſtification of life? The utmoſt care is taken by this method to "hide pride from man", by filling him with the deepeſt ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, and the moſt exalted apprehenſions of God's grace, and the Savior's righteouſneſs.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Human Endeavours, in the Uſe of Means, the Way in which Faith is obtained.

GALATIANS II. 16.

"Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt"—.

THE laſt time I ſpake from theſe words, I opened to you the goſpel-connection between the ſinner's believing, and his being juſtified. And it appeared, that they were inſeparably conjoin'd. There cannot be the one without the other. So ſure as a man becomes a believer, ſo ſure is he put into a ſtate of ſafety, reſpecting the eternal world; and ſo ſure as he remains deſtitute of faith, ſo ſure is he liable to the curſe of the law, and the wrath of God.

THIS being the truth, a moſt intereſting queſtion naturally ariſes from it, in regard of thoſe, who, thro' the want of faith, are in a ſtate of expoſedneſs to the "ſecond death". It is this.

How ſhall we obtain faith? Are we to do any thing, or uſe any means, in order to the obtainment of it?

THE anſwer ſome would give is, "that faith "comes not by any human endeavours, or the "uſe of any means, even under the greateſt ad-"vantages men enjoy; but God beſtows it with-"out any exertments of our's, all which are uſe-"leſs, and ſerve rather to prevent, than promote, "the obtainment of it".

BUT, ſurely, this is an anſwer that has no ſolid foundation in the word of God. When Simon, the ſorcerer, made it evident to the apoſtle Peter, that he was not a ſubject of the faith that is ſaving, did he thereupon adviſe him to the uſe of no endeavours, no means, in order to his getting into a better ſtate? Far from this, his direction is, * "repent, and pray God, if perhaps the tho't of thine heart may be forgiven thee". Would he have thus directed one, that was not poſſeſſed of the "ſaving truth", if he had nothing to do, in order to his becoming poſſeſſed of it? He muſt have tho't it proper, that ſinners, who, at preſent, are deſtitute of ſaving faith", ſhould yet exert themſelves, in the uſe of means, in order to obtain it; or he would not have exhorted this ſinner to the uſe of "prayer", and endeavours "to repent". If he could have done nothing towards

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* Acts 8. 22.

a compliance with this direction, or if what he could have done would have been of no uſe, to no purpoſe, as to any ſpiritual advantage, why was it given to him? It muſt needs appear, in this view, little better than an officious impertinent application to him. And when the jailor fell down, in a trembling condition, before Paul and Silas, and inquired, "ſirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved"? Did they tell him his concern was needleſs? His queſtion impertinent? He had nothing to do? No; but they anſwer in thoſe words, "believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved". * Without all doubt, they imagined he both could, and ought to, do ſomething, relative to this buiſineſs of faith: Otherwiſe, the direction they gave them can have no intelligible meaning.

Nor did our Savior ever teach men, that they could do nothing towards obtaining that faith which is unto life. He ſays indeed, "no man can come to me except the father, which hath ſent me, draw him". † And the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of faith as "the gift of God". ‡ But neither Chriſt, nor Paul, nor any of the Apoſtles, lead us to think, that faith is the beſtowment of God, ſo as to prevent all endeavours of our's; much leſs ſo as to ſet them aſide as totally uſeleſs and vain. The commands in the new-teſtament to believe in Chriſt; the promiſes encouraging men to do ſo, and the threatnings denouncing damnation, aggravated damnation, againſt thoſe that will not be perſuaded to believe the truth, but go on to practice unrighteouſneſs, are ſo many evident proofs, that they are conſi-

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* Acts 16. 31. † Joh. 6. 44. ‡ Eph. 2. 8.

dered as agents, and accountable ones too, in the buiſineſs of faith ; which they could not be, if their own activity was wholly excluded, and God only, in oppoſition to them, and all exertments of their's, was the giver of faith.

When our Savior took occaſion, from that exhortation, he had given his hearers "work (ſo it is in the original) for the meat that endures to everlaſting life," * and from the queſtion they thereupon aſkt him, "what ſhall we do that we may work the works of God" ? † I ſay, when he took occaſion from hence to tell them ? ‡ "This is the work of God (the work God expects and requires you ſhould work,) that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent" ; one would readily be inclined to ſuppoſe, that they had ſomething to do with reference to faith. It would be unnatural, to an high degree, to ſay, the purport of his direction to them was this, do nothing, ſit ſtill, and wait, till it ſhall pleaſe God to work the work of faith in you. He muſt do all in this matter, no exertments of your's are neceſſary ; they are rather uſeleſs and unprofitable. And yet, this muſt be our Savior's meaning, in real implication, if there is no concurence of man in the beſtowment of faith. §

When he preached, ſaying, "repent ye, and believe the goſpel", ‖ had he it in view to inform his hearers, that he neither required, or expected, they ſhould do any other than fold their hands

* John 6. 27. † Ver. 28. ‡ Ver. 29.
§ See what is further ſaid upon this text, under a note ſome pages forward. ‖ Mark. 1. 15.

hands together, and quietly wait, till God, without any concern or care of their's, had wro't faith in their hearts? And yet, this muſt be the true import of what he preached, if it be a doctrine of his, that God, in the beſtowment of faith, prevents all endeavours of our's.

When he commiſſioned his apoſtles to "go into all the world, and preach, he that believeth ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned", * was it his intention, that they ſhould declare to mankind in his name, that if, while they careleſly ſat ſtill, doing nothing, God ſhould beſtow upon them the gift of faith, they ſhould be ſaved; otherwiſe they ſhould be damned? Would ſuch a conſtruction do honor to the commiſſion, with which he charged his apoſtles? And yet, if all human endeavours to obtain faith are totally inſignificant, and God gives it without them, or rather to the caſting contempt on them, this is, in reality of ſenſe, the true meaning of the goſpel, he employed his apoſtles to preach to the world.

When, in anſwer to John's queſtion, "art thou he that ſhould come"? † he ſaid to the two diſciples that bro't it, ‡ "go and ſhew John thoſe things which ye do ſee and hear; the blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached to them": When, I ſay, he ſent this anſwer, did he mean to inſinuate, that neither John, nor his diſciples, had any buiſineſs to conſider this evidence of his being the Meſſiah, or to uſe any care or labor

* Mark. 16. 16. † Matth. 11. 3. ‡ Ver. 4,5.

labour to get ſatisfied, by means of it, that he was the Chriſt? And yet, this, however impertinent it makes the anſwer, muſt be its true implication; if, in order to their believing that he was this perſon, their attending to, and impartially weighing, this evidence in proof of it, was to no purpoſe; as any other endeavours of their's would have been alſo, ſince they could not become the ſubjects of this faith, unleſs God, in prevention of all tho't and care of their's, ſhould beſtow it upon them.

When he ſaid, * to the people of Chorazin and Bethſaida, "if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in ſackcloth and aſhes"; did he intend this as nothing more than a declaration, that God would have given repentance, the fruit of faith, to Tyre and Sidon, without any care or labor of their's, while he ſaw fit to withold this gift from Chorazin and Bethſaida? And yet, this muſt be the ſenſe, if, in conſequence of theſe mighty works, nothing could be done, or was requiſite to be done, towards this repentance, by either of theſe people; and God was to do all without them. And when he goes on to ſay, † "wo unto you Chorazin, wo unto you Bethſaida, it ſhall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you"; does he mean, that they deſerved for their infidelity, and would, on account of it, have inflicted on them, a heavier puniſhment than thoſe ſinners, God tho't fit to deſtroy by fire from heaven for their heinous crimes, when it was abſolutely out of their power,

* Mat. 11. 21. † Ver. 21, 22.

power, by any endeavours, in the uſe of any means, to do any thing towards the obtainment of faith; and there was no way in which they could become the ſubjects of it, but by the gift of God, without any care or concern of their's? It is a moſt diſhonorable reflection on the Savior of men to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould teach ſuch doctrine; and yet, it is the very doctrine pleaded for, put into plain engliſh.

When he complains of ſinners, and blames them for not believing on him, as in thoſe words, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life"; * and again, "how often would I have gathered thy children together as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not"; † can it be imagined, that he eſteemed it a truth of his goſpel, that they could do no more towards coming to him, or believing in him, than towards bringing the truth down from heaven that is the object of faith. ‡ Is it credible, that

* John 5. 40. † Matt. 23. 37.

‡ Our author ſays, pag. 390. "that faith comes not by "any human endeavours, or the uſe of any means, even "under the greateſt advantages that men can enjoy, "but of that ſame ſovereign good pleaſure which pro- "vided the grand thing believed". He expreſſes himſelf yet more freely and fully, pag. 332. in theſe words; "the conveyance of the ſalutary truth to them for "their relief, as much prevents every motion of their "will, as did the ſending of the Savior into the world "to die for men; yea, as did the gracious purpoſe "before the world was". He is ſurely miſtaken in what he has here ſaid: Otherwiſe, that would not be *falſe*, when affirmed of the "object of faith", which is *true*, when affirmed with reference to men's admiting this object into their minds". It would be palpably

that they ſhould be blame-worthy for not doing that which is God's work, and in prevention too of all attempts of their own, in the uſe of any means whatever ?

WHEN palpably falſe to ſay, that " ſending the Savior into the world" might be the matter of a divine command, in any ſenſe obligatory upon men ; it would be equally falſe to affirm, that it would be *ſin* in them, not to " provide the grand thing to be believed" ; and it would, if poſſible, be more groſly falſe ſtill to inſinuate, as tho' they would be worthy of damnation, and an aggravated one, if they did not bring down from heaven the " gracious purpoſe" that lay " hid in God" before the world was : And yet, theſe are unqeſtionable truths, when affirmed of men in regard of " faith", or their " believing the truth". Tis the command of God, obligatory upon all men every where, to whom the evidences of the chriſtian revelation are made known, that they believe in the Savior he has ſent into the world ; they will be chargeable with ſin, if they don't believe in him, according to God's requirement ; and they will be juſtly liable to damnation, yea, a greater damnation than other men, if they continue in unbelief, in oppoſition to the evidence that has been laid before their view. No one can be in doubt about theſe things, who has ever read, and underſtood, the ſacred ſcriptures. But how can it poſſibly be true, that it is men's duty to believe ; that they will ſin if they don't believe ; and ſo ſin as to deſerve a double damnation, if they have no more to do in order to the obtainment of faith, than in " providing the grand thing to be believed" ? If there is no more of man, no more of his concern and care, by any endeavours, in the uſe of any means, in the acquirement of faith, than in " ſending the Savior" that is the object of this faith ? The " miſſion of a Savior", and the " providing the truth to be believed", are every where repreſented, in the ſacred books, as the SOLE work of God, his work ABSOLUTELY, in oppoſition to all ſkill, will, and endeavours of men,

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When he, at one time and another, beſpake his auditors in that moſt compaſſionate language, " he that hath ears to hear, let him hear" ; can it be ſuppoſed, that they could make no uſe of the powers they were endow'd with, about the things he preached to them ? Or that their uſe of them was

in any view whatever. But tis quite otherwiſe in regard of believing. This is conſidered, in the inſpired writings, as a matter in which men are ACCOUNTABLE AGENTS ; and may, as ſuch, incur the charge of guilt, and become expoſed to the " damnation of hell", in the moſt heightened ſenſe. But, with what propriety could men be conſidered as AGENTS in the affair of faith ? Or with what face of juſtice, or equity, could they be liable to the heavieſt damnation for the want of it, if their being endowed with it was the work of God, ſo as to ſet aſide all tho't or care of their's, and all endeavours they could employ, in the uſe of any means, in order to the obtainment of it ? Tis incredible, that men ſhould undergo the ſoreſt puniſhment for their unbelief, if faith is of God as much without all human concurence, as his gracious purpoſe from eternity to provide a Savior to die for them. If this is true, they might as equitably and juſtly be damned for not " providing a Savior" for themſelves, as for not believing in him now he is provided, and revealed as an object to be believed on. The plain truth is, ſo much of man muſt be allowed in the acquirement of faith, as to give a real, as well as equitable and righteous, meaning to thoſe numerous ſayings, not only of the apoſtles, but of Jeſus Chriſt, which caſt the blame upon men themſelves, if they remain in unbelief, and doom them to the hoteſt place in hell for their wilful obſtinacy hereby diſcovered. But this, moſt certainly, is impoſſible to be done, if all human tho't, care, and exertments in every view, are as much excluded from the acquirement of faith, and with as much truth, as from " providing and ſending Chriſt", thro' whom alone we can be

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was quite needleſs, as God, without the concurrence of human endeavours, is the giver of faith to all who are ever the ſubjects of it? Surely, when he upbraids, and faſtens guilt upon thoſe, as he ſometimes does, * who, when they had "ears

* Matth. 13. 13, 14. Joh. 12. 37,——40.

ſaved from periſhing, and have everlaſting life. It would be ſhockingly abſurd to ſay, that men might be chargeable with ſin for not "providing the grand thing to be believed"; or that they might be juſtly damned for not doing it. And why? Becauſe this is the SOLE work of God, his work abſolutely without man, in any ſenſe whatever. And what ſhould be the reaſon, that tis not equally abſurd to ſay, that men may be chargeable with ſin, and ſo as to deſerve the heavieſt damnation, for not "believing the record God has given of his ſon"? No conceivable reaſon can be aſſigned for this difference, but that they have "ſomething to do" with reference to faith; whereas they had "nothing to do" as to providing the object to be believed. A pious zeal to exalt the grace of God, by ſinking man into nothing, may be the pretence for making faith the work of God, to the excluſion of "all human endeavours, or the uſe of any means, even under the greateſt advantages men can enjoy"; but it ought ſeriouſly to be conſidered, whether if we reduce men to abſolute nothings in the affair of faith, that is, if we repreſent it to be God's work, ſo as utterly to ſet aſide all tho't, or care, or endeavours of their's, of any ſort, or in any view whatever, we ſhall not, in true conſequence, nullifie all the ſcripture-commands that require them to believe; rendering their unbelief an innocent thing, for which they ought not to be puniſht, nor indeed can be, unleſs that is done which is unfit and unrighteous. Can it be ſuppoſed, that men ſhould be called upon by God to do that which is "his work", and in ſuch a ſenſe as that all doing of their's, with reference to it, in any ſhape, would be impertinent? Can it be ſuppoſed,

that

" ears to hear, and eyes to ſee" other things, would neither " ſee nor hear" the things he preached to them, tho' of infinitely greater concern ; he very evidently takes it for granted, that it was both the expectation, and requirement of God, that they ſhould have made uſe of their faculties, with reference to theſe important matters of ſalvation ; and that they were highly criminal, as they neglected to do ſo. But why are they blamed for this neglect, if they had nothing to do, till God had given them faith, in the beſtowment of which, all doings of their's are totally excluded ? Can any man, thinking honorably of Chriſt, ſuppoſe, that he would have upbraided theſe perſons for not doing that, which was God's work, not their's ?

In fine, when he went into his own country, and preached in a ſynagogue there, but met with no ſucceſs, his hearers, tho' many, " being offended at him", why is it remarked thereupon, in thoſe obſervable words, " he marvelled becauſe of their unbelief" ? * What occaſion was there for wonder, that they did not believe in him, if they could do nothing towards faith ? Surely, the reaſon of his marvelling was not, that God did not

* Mark 6. 6.

that they ſhould be puniſhable for not doing that which is God's work, to the intire excluſion of every thing in them, relative to it, not excepting " the remoteſt wiſh of their heart" ? All I contend for is, that there may be ſo much of man, in the buiſineſs of faith, as to make ſenſe of the ſcripture, when it ſpeaks of UNBELIEF as a ſin that ſhall be more intolerably puniſht, than the abominable uncleaneſs of Sodom ; and to juſtifie the righteouſneſs of God herein.

not ſee fit to give them faith! And yet, this would be the only true reaſon for wonderment in the caſe, if it is a truth, that faith is the gift of God in a ſenſe that prevents, yea, abſolutely excludes, all previous endeavours of men, in any ſhape whatever.

I AM free to own, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid, that God is ſometimes "found of thoſe who ſought him not". * So he is in the "kingdom of nature", and in the "kingdom of grace" alſo. There is, in this reſpect, an analogy in the divine conduct, in both theſe kingdoms. That providential government, which concerns itſelf particularly for man, ſometimes prevents all human ſkill & induſtry in thoſe diſcoveries, which ſerve for the accommodation of life. "The polar direction

* I here uſe theſe words in the ſenſe, in which our author would interpret them; tho', perhaps, it differs from that which is expreſſive of the true meaning of the prophet Iſaiah, (chap.65. 1.) from wnom they are taken. Says the great Mr. How, in his "bleſſedneſs of the righteous", pag. 282. "The prophet is, in this "text, foretelling the calling of the Gentiles; who, "while they remained ſuch, did not, tis true, enquire "after God: But then, he expreſly firſt tells us, per-"ſonating God, "I am ſought of them that aſked "not for me", that is, after the goſpel came among "them: And then tis added, "I am found *(upon "this ſeeking* plainly) of them that ſought me not", "that is, of thoſe who once, in their former darkneſs, "before I revealed myſelf in the goſpel-diſpenſation "to them, "ſought me not". As if he had ſaid, I "am now ſought of a people that lately ſought me "not, nor aſked of me; and I am found of them. "But what is this to thy caſe, whom God hath been, "in the goſpel, earneſtly inviting to ſeek after him, "and thou, all this while, refuſeſt to comply with "the invitation"?

" direction of the magnet obtruded itſelf upon " the firſt diſcoverer, when he was in queſt of no " ſuch thing, being occupied in ſome very differ- " ent inquiry". And it is ſometimes ſeen, that favorable turns in providence, unforeſeen, untho't of, by the perſons benefited by them, conſtitute the great difference there is between them, and others, as to their after-ſituation and circumſtances in the world. And thus it is ſometimes in that ſpiritual government, which God exerciſes over men. It was previous to any endeavours of Saul, afterwards Paul, and indeed preventive of any wiſh in his heart, that he was ſuddenly and ſurpriſingly changed, from a perſecutor of Chriſt, into a believer in him. And there may have been inſtances of profligate and debauched ſinners, who have as ſuddenly (if not in the like ſurpriſing manner) been changed into good men, thro' faith in him whom God has ſent to be the Savior of a periſhing world. But will any pretend, tis a needleſs uſeleſs thing for men to employ their tho'ts, or time, or hands, about temporal affairs, becauſe it ſometimes pleaſes God, without their ſkill, induſtry, or will, to do that which greatly tends to their accommodation and benefit in life? Would a man be deemed to be in the regular exerciſe of his intellectual powers, ſhould he deliberately ſit ſtill, and wait for ſome extraordinary diſcovery from God, to ſupply the place of that uſe of his own faculties, bodily and mental, in the uſe of which only he has reaſon to expect, according to the eſtabliſht courſe of providence, that God will furniſh him with the good things his convenience or neceſſity call for? It would be like folly, only heightened in degree,

for perſons, in the great affairs of ſalvation and another world, to lay aſide all tho't, care and pains of their own, waiting forGod to prevent,ſuperſede, and caſt contempt upon all human endeavours, by immediately diſcovering the truth to them, ſo as that they ſhall believe it to the ſaving of their ſouls. If God has ſometimes, in this way, made ſuch diſcoveries to ſinners, he has herein acted beſide his ordinary method in the kingdom of grace, as really as when, in the kingdom of providence, he has prevented men's induſtry, by interpoſing his own wiſdom, without it, in beſtowing ſignal favors upon them. The goſpel-revelation every where proceeds upon this ſuppoſition. It ſpeaks of God, tis true, while acting in the kingdom of grace, as the " giver of faith" ; and it ſpeaks of him alſo, while ruling in the kingdom of providence, as the " giver of outward good things". And why may not faith be his gift, as well as temporal proſperity, in concurence with human endeavours, in the uſe of properly adapted means ? Why may he not, by the intervention of men's faculties, ſuitably employed, be the beſtower of ſpiritual,as well as temporal gifts ? His agency in ſpiritual matters, tho' different from what it is in temporal ones, and exerted to a quite different purpoſe, may yet be adapted to the make and conſtitution of men, and operate in concurence with their powers and endeavours. And this is the way in which God ordinarily beſtows ſpiritual good things, and faith in particular.

Not but that he has done a great deal, in order to the beſtowment of faith, without the concurence

concurence of men, without the intervention of human faculties, or endeavours, in any view whatever. But ſtill, he no more ordinarily BEGINS, than carries on, the work of faith, as it reſpects it's exiſtence and operation in the hearts of ſinners, without the concuring uſe of their powers and endeavours. A particular illuſtration of this matter may be of uſe. It is certainly of great importance to ſinners to know, whether they have any thing to do towards the obtainment of faith; and wherein their care and labor may be of ſervice, if they are at all needful.

IT ſhall be my buiſineſs to ſet this whole affair in a clear and full point of light. In order whereto, I ſhall be diſtinct in ſhewing, what it is God does, relative to faith, preventive of all human endeavours; what it is men may and ought to do themſelves, in dependence on God; and, finally, that it is ordinarily in concurence with theſe endeavours of their's, that God BEGINS, as well as carries on, the work of faith in them.

As to the firſt;—it is readily and thankfully acknowledged, that God, in the riches of his grace, has done ſome things in order to faith previous to, and preventive of, all human tho't, or labor in any kind.

THE truth to be believed, or, what means the ſame thing, the object of faith, is wholly of God. This can, in no ſenſe, be ſaid to be owing to, or dependent on, either the will of man, or any thing he was ever able to do. Tis the ſole work of God. Of his meer mercy he contrived, and then

revealed the truth to be believed. This he did, in a ſummary comprehenſive way, to Adam; to Abraham; to the jewiſh nation by Moſes, tho' not plainly, but under various types and figures; afterwards, to this ſame people by a ſucceſſion of prophets, thro' a long ſeries of time, but ſtill in a manner that left them much in the dark: And, laſt of all, by his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles, who opened his everlaſting counſels with reference to our apoſtate world, and the wonderful method his infinite wiſdom, moved by his boundleſs love and compaſſion, was pleaſed to contrive and execute for the redemption of ſinners. This, in general, is the truth to be believed; and it is the gift of God, his free gift, preventive of all human tho't.

And as the truth to be believed, ſo the evidence in proof of its being the truth, is wholly of God. It muſt be ſo wherein the truth carries with it the ſignatures of God, and is evidential of its own divinity; becauſe it came ſolely from him, previous to any ſkill, or will of man. And it is ſo alſo in regard of its external evidence. It was God that inſpired holy men, in old time, to foretell the coming of Chriſt to be the Savior, and to publiſh thoſe prophetic marks by which he might be diſtinguiſhed from all pretenders, when he ſhould come. It was God, dwelling in his ſon, while he appeared in our fleſh, that did thoſe miracles, wonders and ſigns, which gave credit to his character as an approved meſſenger from heaven. And it was God that wro't thoſe numerous and diverſified wonderful works, (in the doing whereof the apoſtles were only inſtruments) which

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are the public, ſtanding and authentic proof of the divinity of the goſpel-doctrine. Theſe are the teſtimonies of God; and, by theſe, he has witneſſed from heaven, that he ſent Chriſt, and his apoſtles; and that the word they preached was the truth. And in thus bearing witneſs to the truth, God is every thing, and man nothing. God only is the author of this ground or reaſon for faith, preventive of all human ſkill, contrivance, or tho't.

The ſpecial part aſſigned to the holy Ghoſt, in carrying the redemption by Chriſt into effect, is wholly of God likewiſe. This divine agent does nothing, in this great affair, but in conſequence of a conſtitution, which took riſe from God, without any thing of man. If he diſpoſes and enables the ſinner to believe the truth as it is in Jeſus, he does it (whatever is the manner of his operation, which is not the thing we are now conſidering) as having been appointed and authoriſed hereto. And whatever he does in the kingdom of God, and Chriſt, whether in beginning, carrying on, or compleating, the work of faith, or any other good work, he does it as the conſtituted diſpenſer of divine grace. And this merciful eſtabliſhment of God, providing for the ſinner's being endowed with faith, and every other ſpiritual quality, is intirely of himſelf, and was made previous to all ſkill, will, or even the remoteſt tho't of man. How far the divine Spirit may make uſe of human faculties and endeavours, in the execution of his office, will be conſidered afterwards; but his being veſted with his office, and deputed the grand agent in producing faith,

and other graces, in the hearts of the ſinful ſons of Adam, was previous to all human doing, or thinking, with reference hereto. It was the ſole contrivance, and conſtitution of God. There is nothing of man in it, in any view whatever.

THERE are yet other ways, in which God prevents men's endeavours, and ſometimes even their tho'ts, in order to their obtainment of faith. He has done this by ſending "the word of truth", unſought, unlooked for, by them. An obſervable inſtance, in this kind, we have in the 16th chap. of the Acts, by conſulting which you will find, that as Paul, with two of his fellow-laborers in the Lord, had it in their hearts to preach the goſpel to ſeveral places, they imagined they ſhould go thro' in their travels, they were "forbidden by the holy Ghoſt", as the words are, in the 6th ver. "The Spirit ſuffered them not", as it is otherwiſe expreſſed, ver. 7. And while they were at Troas, Paul, in "a viſion of the night," ſees a man, having the garb and ſpeech of a Macedonian, coming to, and addreſſing, him in that affecting language, ver. 9. "come over into Macedonia, and help us": Upon which it follows, ver. 10. "and after he had ſeen the viſion, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia; aſſuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us to preach the goſpel to them". It was not therefore owing to any endeavours of the people of Macedonia, that the goſpel was bro't to them, but to the divine Spirit, directing theſe miniſters of Chriſt to carry it to them. And in this ſame way was the truth made known, in the firſt days of the goſpel, to the gentile nations. And this is the meaning,

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at leaſt in part, of thoſe words of Iſaiah, which the apoſtle Paul applies to theſe nations, " I was found of them that ſought me not, I was made manifeſt to them that aſked not after me". * And in thoſe places, where the goſpel has for many years been preached, and where there are great numbers of believers in Chriſt, as the Jews are in Moſes, and the Turks in Mahomet, that is, by education & cuſtom, and in this ſenſe only, the firſt thing giving riſe to the obtainment of " like previous faith" with the primitive chriſtians, as to one and another of them, has ſometimes been preventive of all endeavours of their's. Some awakening providence has rouſed their attention; or, without any foreſight of their own, they have been in the way of ſome word of truth, ſo adapted to their caſe, and ſo obſervably pointing out their character, and danger, that it has, under the divine influence, impreſſed their hearts, and given ſuch a turn to their tho'ts and purſuits, as has ended in the ſalvation of their ſouls. And there are few, perhaps, in chriſtian countries, eſpecially among thoſe who have for any time, after their arrival at maturity of years, " walkt in the way of their heart, and in the ſight of their eyes", but muſt aſcribe their obtainment of faith, if they really poſſeſs it, to ſomething or other in the providence, or word, of God, that firſt awakened their conſideration, and this without any previous foretho't, or endeavours of their own.

In theſe and ſuch like ſenſes, God is beforehand with ſinners. The truth to be believed is certainly provided by him, without all care or

* Rom. 10. 20.

tho't of their's; and ſo is the ſeal he has ſet to it as his truth; and the agency likewiſe of the divine Spirit to give it an enlivened and efficacious virtue: Nor will it be denied, that he ſends the goſpel, where it is not, commonly unſought for; or that he often prevents the ſinners who already enjoy it, by ſome providential ſtroke, or word of truth, by which they are ſet a thinking in good earneſt. But ſtill, the endeavours of ſinners, in ſubordination to the agency of the divine Spirit, are far from being ſuperſeded. Notwithſtanding all that God does without them, they will be altogether inexcuſable, if they ſit idle as tho' they had nothing to do themſelves, and all doings of their's would be uſeleſs and vain. Which brings me,

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

IN the next place, to point out to you what men may do, and ought to do, in order to their becoming the ſubjects of that faith which is juſtifying. Only let the two or three following things be previouſly obſerved, and conſidered.

THE firſt is; when I ſay, the ſinner may do ſome things towards the obtainment of faith, I don't mean, that the things which he may do are acts or inſtances of the faith he is ſeeking, not being as yet poſſeſſed of it. This would be to ſpeak abſurdly. There muſt be the principle of faith, before there can be the exerciſe of it in any degree whatever. If therefore the ſinner can do any thing in order to faith, what he does muſt be conſidered as proceding, not from the faith he is endeavouring to obtain, but from ſome other principle of action. While men are deſtitute of faith, tis a contradiction to ſay, that they can either think, ſpeak, or do any thing, as taking riſe from this ſpring of operation. To direct them therefore to ſuch exerciſes, whether internal or external, as muſt proceed from faith, in order to their obtaining faith, is, in reality of conſtruction, to direct them to nothing. Such a direction is

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in itſelf a nullity ; as truly ſo as it would be to direct a blind man, or a deaf man, to perform ſome action that ſuppoſed the faculties of ſeeing, or hearing, in order to their being endowed with them. The direction, in both theſe caſes, would be equally deſtructive of itſelf. It could mean nothing, unleſs to inſult thoſe to whom it was given.

I AM therefore free to own, that the endeavours of ſinners, in order to ſaving faith, are not to be looked upon as acts of that faith they are at preſent deſtitute of ; nay, I am ready to allow, that none of their tho'ts, no motions of their hearts, no workings of their affections, no exertments of themſelves in wiſhes, or deſires, ought to be conſidered as exerciſes ofthis faith ; but ſo far as they may have experience of them, they are the effects of ſome other principles they are endowed with. If any popular preachers, or others of more ſolid judgment, have expreſſed themſelves ſo as to lead one to think, it was their deſign to put men upon endeavours that ſuppoſe faith, in order to their being endowed with it, they are, without all doubt, chargeable with great inconſiſtency : Tho' I would not charge them with the perception of it ; much leſs would I take occaſion, from their being unwarily inconſiſtent with themſelves, to ſpeak of them as deceivers that are going themſelves, and leading others, to the place of endleſs deſtruction.

ANOTHER thing I deſire may be previouſly taken notice of is, that ſinners, tho' deſtitute of the faith that is juſtifying, have yet other principles

ciples in their nature, that are capable of giving riſe to a great variety of actions, both inward and outward; and this, as it reſpects religion, and the ſalvation of their ſouls. As intelligent moral beings, they are endowed not only with perceptive powers, rendering them capable of admiting ideas into their minds, the original materials of all knowledge; they are endowed not only with the faculty of retaining theſe ideas there, of attending to them, of comparing them one with another, of judging of their agreement or diſagreement, and, in theſe ways, of diſcovering a great variety of intereſting truths: I ſay, not only are they endowed with theſe capacities, but with liberty of choice, and a power, in conſequence hereof, of acting this way or that, without hindrance or reſtraint. Beſides all which, a variety of different paſſions and affections are planted in their nature, rendering them capable of various and different emotions, both agreable and diſagreable, and of being rouſed, in conſequence of them, to determinations and purſuits, as various and different, as the feelings in their minds that are the occaſion of them. Nor has ſin deſtroyed any of theſe powers of human nature; tho' it has greatly diſturbed the regularity of their operations. Sinners, notwithſtanding all their depravity and guilt, are ſtill capable of thinking, reaſoning, conſidering, reflecting; they are ſtill capable of chuſing ſome things in preference to others, and of ordering their conduct conformably to ſuch choice; they are ſtill ſuſceptible of all the emotions that are ſignified by love or hatred, joy or grief, hope or fear, or any other paſſion or affection; and of being variouſly excited to action,

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by means of them. A large fund, you ſee, is here opened for human endeavours, from other principles beſides that of faith which is juſtifying; and conſequently that ſinners, who have not this faith, and can do nothing, not ſo much as exert one wiſh, or tho't, from this principle, may yet do a great deal from other principles planted in their nature. And theſe are the doings that are meant by thoſe that are precedaneous to juſtifying faith, and ſpoken of as performed in order to the obtainment of it.

THERE is yet another thing, I would deſire might be previouſly remembred, and this is, that, when I ſpeak of what ſinners may do, in order to the obtainment of the faith that juſtifies, I would not be underſtood to mean, much leſs to ſuggeſt, as tho' they could do any thing, relative to this affair, without God. For as they derived all their powers of operation from him, ſo are they abſolutely dependant on him, not only for the continuance, but exerciſe, of them. "In him they live and move", as it was from him that they received their beings. Tis by his influence, ſuſtaining their powers, and concuring with them, that they are enabled both to think, will, ſpeak, and do: Nor without this influence could they exert any power, either of their ſouls, or bodies. But beſides this general influence of the firſt cauſe on all the doings of men, there is another ſort of influence of a ſuperior kind, a ſpiritual one, that is afforded even to ſinners, while in an unjuſtified ſtate, in relation to the affairs of religion and ſalvation. It will not, I ſuppoſe, be denied by any, who profeſs a regard to the ſacred writings, that thoſe who will finally

finally periſh may yet be favored with the common illuminations, and ordinary aſſiſtances, of the ſpirit of grace. God ſtrove more than a hundred years by his Spirit with the old world; tho' he afterwards deſtroyed them for corrupting themſelves, in oppoſition to the ſtrivings of his Spirit with them. And there are thouſands in the chriſtian world, who will be "hurt of the ſecond death", notwithſtanding the ſtrivings of God's Spirit with them, in conſequence of which they may have been under convictions, awakenings, enlightnings, and perhaps imagined joys of the holy Ghoſt. There is certainly a common influence of the Spirit of God, which ſinners may be the ſubjects of, while deſtitute of the faith that is ſaving. Whenever therefore I ſpeak of what ſinners may do in order to this faith, I would be underſtood to mean, not what they may do, in their own ſtrength, under the general concurence of God with their natural powers; but what they may do with the concuring influence of the Spirit of grace, which may be, and actually is, afforded to them. Theſe are the doings I intend. Accordingly, way being made herefor, I go on to declare what theſe doings are: Nor ſhall I think it impertinent, if I am a little particular in pointing them out. Let it then be ſaid,

THEY may, by exerting their powers of reaſon and underſtanding, under the advantages they are favored with, be ſo far perſuaded of the exiſtence and perfections of God, as to be left inexcuſeable if they don't do honor to him. Thus much we are taught by an inſpired apoſtle, who ſays, "that the inviſible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood

derſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead : So that they (the heathen nations) are without excuſe, becauſe, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God". *

THEY may likewiſe ſo employ their natural faculties as to diſcern a difference between moral good and evil ; or, what means the ſame thing, between virtue and vice, between what is commanded and what is forbidden by the natural law of God. This, the ſame divine writer very evidently intimates, when he ſpeaks of the Gentiles, " who have not the revealed law of God", as " doing by nature the things contained in this law", and as being " a law to themſelves", tho' they " have not this written law". †

AND as they may, by the exerciſe of their intellectual powers, perceive a real difference in the nature of actions as virtuous or vicious, ſo may they, in like manner, become convinced in their conſciences of the obligations they are under to chuſe and purſue the former, rather than the latter ; and be bro't to view themſelves as liable to the righteous reſentments of God, wherein they fail of doing ſo. To this purpoſe are thoſe words, in the epiſtle to the Romans, in which the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of the Gentiles, and their groſs immoralities, in violation of the law of nature, ſays, " they do them" themſelves, " and take pleaſure in them that do them", while, at the ſame time, " they know the judgment of God, and that they that commit ſuch things are worthy of death". ‖

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* Rom. 1. 21, 22. † Rom. 2. 14.
‖ Rom. 1. 32.

THEY may alſo, by uſing their implanted powers, be led into a perſuaſion of the immortality of their ſouls, a future ſtate of retribution, and their obnoxiouſneſs to puniſhment in that ſtate, having been ſinners againſt the "law of their minds", which is the law of God; yea, in conſequence of this perſuaſion, they may, being moved with fear, earneſtly inquire, what they ſhall do to eſcape this wrath of God, they are ſenſible they are expoſed to? This is evident from the fore-bodings of vengeance in the conſciences of many among the heathen, and the various methods they have taken to appeaſe their gods, and avoid their angry reſentments.

AND as they may, by care, in the exerciſe of their reaſon, under the common bleſſing of God, be perſuaded of the truth of natural religion, ſo may they, by like care, in the uſe of the ſame faculty, under the ordinary influence of heaven, become believers in revelation; what I here mean is, ſuch believers as multitudes were, in the days of Moſes and the prophets, of Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles; who, tho' they were really believers, and did a great deal from the faith they were poſſeſſed of, were yet deſtitute of that faith which is unto life. The evidences in proof of revelation lie open to inquiry by all, who are favored with the knowledge of them. And ſinners, who are thus favored, may, if they pleaſe, attend to them, and examine them with a becoming care and diligence. And they will be under great advantage thus to do, if they have had excited in them a ſenſe of guilt and danger, by the truths of natural religion. Their minds will now be prepared to take theſe proofs into their ſerious conſideration, and to deliberate upon them as mat-

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ters in which they are nearly and awfully concerned. And if they thus attend to, and examine them, they may, under the illuminating influences of the Spirit that are common, become poſſeſt of a real faith in revelation, if it ſhould not be the faith that is ſaving ; and it may diſcover its real being in them, by the influence it has upon them. It may put them upon doing many things, they would not otherwiſe have tho't of doing ; yea, it may ſtrongly operate on their paſſions and affections, and in this way excite them to great zeal, diligence and activity in their endeavours to be ſaved.

They may, in conſequence of their faith in revelation, tho' a faith ſhort of that which is juſtifying, be led, under the common guidance of the Spirit, to ſee the ſinfulneſs of ſin, and the amazing danger it expoſes the ſinner to, in a much ſtronger light than by their faith in natural religion ; and this may give a more thorow alarm to their conſciences, awakening their fears, and putting them upon inquiring, with more anxious ſollicitude, " what ſhall we do to be ſaved." ?

They may, in conſequence of this faith, eſpecially in this awakened ſtate of mind, heartily grieve for their paſt commiſſions of ſin, and carefully endeavour to be no more chargeable with ſuch commiſſions for the future. They may avoid the places and company that were heretofore the occaſion of their being " drawn aſide and enticed". They may watch againſt temptation, and keep upon their guard ſo as to " eſcape the pollutions of the world", and to a degree that ſhall engage the attention of thoſe acquainted with them.

THEY may alſo, in conſequence of this faith, take up the practice of formerly neglected duties, and may practiſe them, not only with external decorum, but with a ſerious ſolemn frame of mind; as being inwardly and greatly concerned about the affairs of religion and another world.

THEY may (to come to inſtances here) engage in the duty of reading God's word; and they may perform it daily, and with ſuch care, diligence and attention, as to become poſſeſſed of a clear doctrinal knowledge of its truths; yea, they may attain to ſuch a knowledge of theſe truths, as to have excited in them an earneſt ſollicitude to be formed by them, under the enlightening influences of the good Spirit, to a meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſanctified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt.

THEY may employ their minds in religious meditation, taking off their tho'ts from the world, the vanities, the gaities, the amuſements, the pleaſures, the riches and honors of it; and fixing them on thoſe inviſible objects that are adapted to ſoften their hearts, rouſe their conſciences, warm their affections, enliven their paſſions, animate their reſolutions, and preſerve in them that tenderneſs of ſpirit, with reference to the things of God and ſalvation, without which they will ſoon become tho'tleſs and ſecure, the moſt dangerous ſtate they can be in.

THEY may attend the inſtitutions of chriſtianity, and may do it, not meerly becauſe it is the faſhion to do ſo, and it might be diſreputable practically to diſpiſe them by an habitual neg-

lect of them, but with a real view to be profited by them in the religious ſenſe; at the ſame time, hoping and wiſhing to meet with that which may, by the bleſſing of God, prove beneficial to their ſouls.

THEY may, in ſpecial, be much in prayer to the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of mercies, and God of all grace; and they may pray to him, really believing that he may, thro' Chriſt, ſhew favor to ſuch ſinners as they are, however unworthy of his notice, however deſerving of his righteous diſpleaſure. And they may continue in prayer; praying with great fervency, importunity and perſeverance, as thoſe that are in real good earneſt. And, as the divine Spirit is the great agent in preparing ſinners for the redemption by Jeſus Chriſt, they may be humbly urgent in their application to the throne of mercy for the holy Ghoſt, to give them that view of the truth in its divinity and glory, without which they will never be the ſubjects of the faith which is "unto life". And they may pray for this enlightening influence of the Spirit, as being deeply ſenſible of the need they ſtand in of it, and that without it they ſhall not ſee the truth ſo as to believe it to ſalvation.

THUS ſinners, tho' deſtitute, as yet, of ſaving faith, may do a great many things in religion, from other, and lower principles. And, I may add, their doings of this ſort may be ſo like the doings that proceed from the faith, by which "the juſt do live", that there may be no viſible difference between them; yea, the various af-

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fections of their ſouls, their love, their joy, their grief, their hatred, their ſhame, their hope, their fear, may be ſet into motion, and the appearance of it may ſo nearly reſemble the working of the ſame affections in thoſe, who are the diſciples of Chriſt in deed and in truth, that it may not be eaſy, if poſſible, for by-ſtanders to diſtinguiſh between them.

And need I now ſay, that ſinners ought to do theſe things? Their obligation is inſeperably connected with their capacity, and all along keeps pace with it. If they are capable of doing, they are bound to do, and in every inſtance to which their capacity extends. And herein indeed will lie their guilt, and the aggravation of it, if they continue in unbelief; not that they did not, by their own power, work faith in themſelves; but that they did not do what they might have done, were endowed with a capacity, and placed under advantages, to do. And in this view of their caſe, they will be left without all excuſe. They muſt ſtand ſpeechleſs before the throne of judgment; and when ſentence of condemnation is pronounced againſt them, it muſt be acknowleged to be juſt by all angels and men.

Tis true, they can neither abſtain from ſin, nor practiſe duty, from a principle of ſaving faith, not being endowed with it; but, as they can do both, from other principles, tho' of an inferior kind, ſhall they not do what they can do? Are they not obliged to this? Is it not the reaſonable expectation of God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? Tis certainly fit they ſhould avoid all acts of ſin

within their power, tho' the motives prompting them hereto ſhould not be thoſe "ſpiritual" ones, that influence thoſe that are "in Chriſt Jeſus". Should they ceaſe from doing evil thro'fear of that "indigation and wrath, which God has revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men", they would, without all controverſy, act a more rational part, than if they went on ſinning, without reſtraint from theſe "terrors of the Lord". Nay, may I not ſay, that they would act from a "good principle", tho' not the beſt and higheſt, ſhould they, being "moved with fear", make it their earneſt endeavour to abſtain from even "the appearance of evil"? The apoſtle Paul tho't this a "good principle", tho' not the beſt; otherwiſe, he would not have "perſuaded men by the terrors of the Lord". If it was reaſonable in him to "perſuade them by theſe terrors", it muſt be equally reaſonable in them to be perſuaded by them. And wherein ſinners are wro't upon, by any conſiderations proper to work upon reaſonable creatures, to forſake their evil ways, the principles they are influenced by are "good in themſelves", tho they ſhould fall ſhort of thoſe that are peculiar to juſtified believers. To be ſure, tis infinitely better, they ſhould avoid ſin from theſe principles, than that they ſhould go on in the practice of it; better in itſelf, better for them, better for the world: And it would be more for the honor of God, and the intereſt of religion.

And tis, in like manner, reaſonable and fit, that men ſhould be earneſt and diligent in their endeavours to do their duty, from the beſt principles

ciples they are endowed with, tho' they ſhould come ſhort of thoſe "ſpiritual" ones that are the nobleſt. They may be excited to theſe endeavours, from the ſame motives that excite them to avoid ſin ; ſome of which are "good in themſelves", tho' not of the higheſt kind. And will they not be altogether inexcuſable, if they don't, from theſe principles, endeavour to do their duty ? Is it not far more reaſonable, they ſhould do the beſt they can, from theſe principles, than that they ſhould live in the total neglect of their duty.*

* Some it may be, will ſay, they had better live in the omiſſion of duty ; they had better not pray, or meditate, or read, or hear God's holy word, or attend on any of the inſtitutions of the chriſtian religion, unleſs they can perform theſe duties in that "ſpiritual manner", and in the exerciſe of theſe "ſuperior principles", which are peculiar to the ſubjects of "like precious faith" with thoſe, who are "in Chriſt Jeſus". The anſwer is, what is this, in true purport, but to ſay, that tis better for men, who are "reaſonable" creatures, not to act "rationally", unleſs they can, at the ſame time, act "ſpiritually", as true chriſtians, believers unto life ? What is it, in reality of conſtruction, but to ſay, that tis beſt, moſt fit and right, not to obey the "dictates of reaſon", not to hearken to the "voice of conſcience", which is the voice of God, unleſs it be done upon the higheſt and nobleſt, that is, truly chriſtian principles ? What is it, in juſt conſequence, but to ſay, that the total neglect of what ought to be done is preferable to the doing of it, unleſs it be done in a truly gracious manner ? And what will follow upon this principle ? It will unavoidably follow herefrom, that rebellion againſt the authority of God, diſobedience to, and contempt of, his commands, are rather to be choſen than the higheſt regard we can pay to them "merely as reaſonable" creatures. It will likewiſe follow herefrom,

Tis certainly better to expreſs a regard to the duty they owe both to God and man, tho' they ſhould do it from no higher a principle than the "fear of hell", than that they ſhould careleſly and habitually neglect it in diſregard of this awful place of puniſhment.

But herefrom, that idleneſs, doing nothing, would be better, in the religious ſenſe, than induſtry and diligence, in the common buiſineſs of life, where, thro' want of a principle of "ſaving faith", we could exerciſe this diligence, not "ſpiritually", but in a "rational" way only. But whoever made it an objection againſt plowing, or merchandiſing, or following any of the occupations of life, that he could not herein act from a principle of "true faith in Chriſt", tho' he might upon the higheſt motives that were "meerly rational". One would ſcarce think a man ſerious, ſhould he plead thus. And yet, the abſurdity is equally glaring in matters pertaining to religion and another world. Tis really a groſs impoſition men put upon themſelves, when they ſay, or think, they had better ſit ſtill, and do nothing, than engage in the performance of the duties of piety, unleſs they are previouſly the ſubjects of the "faith by which the juſt do live". They are "reaſonable creatures", if they an't "true believers". And ought they not to act up to their character as ſuch, by acting conformably to ſuch "rational principles" as they are endowed with? Can any thing be more unaccountably abſurd, and ſtrange, than that reaſonable creatures ſhould object againſt doing their duty as well as they can, becauſe they can't do it in the beſt manner? Eſpecially, ſince if they don't do it, they muſt live in neglect of God, and open contempt of his laws and government, and hereby run the hazard of expoſing themſelves to the higheſt degrees of his diſpleaſure. The truth is, "rational" principles are good ones, tho' not thoſe "ſpiritual" ones that are the beſt. And tis better, upon all accounts, more for our own good, and God's honor,

But what makes theſe endeavours of ſinners moſt of all reaſonable, and fit, is the conſideration, that they may, of the mercy of God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt, turn out, in the end, to their ſpiritual and everlaſting advantage. And this leads me to ſay,——

honor, that we ſhould engage in duty, and perform it, from theſe principles, in the beſt manner we can, than that we ſhould live in the perpetual neglect of it, for want of that "goſpel-principle", which is more noble and ſpiritual, true faith in Jeſus Chriſt.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

IN the laſt place, that tis "ordinarily" in concurence with "theſe endeavours" of ſinners, thatGod beſtows hisSpirit to "begin",as well as carry on,the work of faith in their hearts. He does not exert his influence to this ſaving purpoſe, ſo as to ſuperſede, or ſet aſide, all previous preparation, in the uſe of means and endeavours. If he has done thus in here and there a ſingle inſtance, ſuch rare caſes ought not to be made the ſtandard of his conduct in this matter. Tis not the way in which he "ordinarily" proceeds.

AND for the proof of this, I may appeal to the experience of thoſe, who have "obtained like precious faith" with the primitive diſciples of Chriſt, and are clearly ſatisfied of it by its having formed them into new men, and diſpoſed and enabled them to all chriſtian labors of love, and works of piety and righteouſneſs.

SOME of you, it may be, were going on in a courſe of ſin, tho'tleſs of God, and unconcerned about the great affairs of religion and another world,

world, when, by ſome awakening providence, or ſeaſonable word of truth, you were rouſed to ſerious ſelf-reflection. But, after this, and before you had reaſon to account yourſelves believers unto life, were you not ſorely preſſed in your minds, from a ſenſe of ſin and guilt ? Were you not herefrom conſtrained to come to a ſtop in this or the other vicious courſe ? Were you not excited to take up the practice of this and that neglected duty ? Could you be eaſy without ſearching the ſcriptures, in which you might find the words of eternal life ? Could you let ſlip favorable opportunities for prayer to the God, who ſeeth in ſecret ? Could you avoid being preſent at thoſe places, where you might be inſtructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and of Chriſt ?—And are you not able to ſay, at ſuch or ſuch a time, while conſulting the ſacred books of revelation, or pouring out your ſouls in fervent prayer to the God of all grace, or employing your minds in meditation on the inviſible objects of the eternal world, or giving your earneſt attention to ſome ſuitable truths bro't to you in the diſpenſation of the word, you had ſuch a view of God, of Chriſt, of yourſelves ; you had ſuch a ſight of the divinity, the glory and importance of revealed truths, as leads you to think the work of faith was then wro't in you with power ? Eſpecially, as, from this time, you have been enabled to walk, in ſome good meaſure, " worthy of the Lord Jeſus unto all pleaſing", and of the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who has thus called you into his kingdom.

It may be, as to others of you, the ſame work has been wro't in you, tho' not in the ſame perceptible way. You have been concerned about your ſouls, and their eternal well-being; you have ſeen yourſelves to be ſinners, and, as ſuch, liable to divine wrath; you have ſeen that there is no help for you, but by grace thro' Chriſt; you have ſought the favor of God, thro' him who has been the "propitiation for ſin", and have often done it, and with fervency and importunity; you have waited upon God in the uſe of all appointed means, and have waited upon him ſeriouſly and earneſtly; wiſhing and hoping for a bleſſing: And you are at length able to ſay, one and another of you, "whereas I was once blind, I now ſee". The truths of revelation have appeared to me in ſuch a light, have ſo moved my heart, have ſo influenced my conſcience, have ſo bowed my will, have ſo turned the current of my affections, and have become ſuch a ſpring of action in me, in conformity to the revealed rule of duty, that I can't but hope I am poſſeſſed of that faith in Jeſus Chriſt, which will finally iſſue in "ſalvation with eternal glory".

I doubt not, I have here deſcribed "the way", in which ſome of you that hear me, & many others, have, under the agency of the divine Spirit, been bro't into the life of God, and a ſtate of acceptance with him thro' Jeſus the Savior. And tis the "common way" in which the work of God is begun in thoſe, who effectually believe; unleſs we ſhould except ſome, who might have been ſavingly taught of God ſo early in life, that they know not how they became the ſubjects of "unfeigned

feigned faith" ; tho' they are well aſſured it really " dwells in them".

And the ſcripture accords with experience in pointing this out, as the " ordinary way" of the Spirit, in making men partakers of the grace of God in truth.

The Elias, whoſe coming was to precede the coming of the Meſſiah, is ſpoken of by the prophet Malachi, in thoſe words, " behold, I will ſend my meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me".* John Baptiſt was " this Elias which was to come". † And our Savior, ſpeaking of him, calls him " a prophet, and more than a prophet" ; adding this as the reaſon of ſo honorable a teſtimony concerning him, " for this is he of whom it is written, behold, I ſend my meſſenger before my face, which ſhall prepare thy way before thee". ‡ The language here uſed evidently alludes to Harbingers, and ſuch otherMeſſengers, as were employed, upon the journeyings of princes, to take care to level the ways, and remove all obſtructions that might incommode their paſſing along, or render it leſs convenient. In analogy herewith, John's buſineſs, as theMeſſiah's harbinger, was, not only to give notice of his approaching advent, but to prepare the way for it by removing obſtacles, and begeting in ſinners a diſpoſition ſuited to the deſign of it, and that might tend to put them in a readineſs to hearken to his doctrine. And this he did, at leaſt in part, by rouſing them to a ſenſe of danger, that, being " moved with fear", they might endeavour to avoid

* Mal. 3. 1. † Matth. 11. 14. ‡ Matth. 11. 9,10.

avoid it. That was the ſpirit of his preaching, at leaſt to ſome of his hearers, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.—The ax is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and caſt into the fire. I indeed baptiſe you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I,—whoſe fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire". * But, if all previous preparation was uſeleſs, why was John ſent to make it? If it were to no purpoſe, that ſinners ſhould feel their expoſedneſs to wrath, or endeavour to eſcape it, why was he ſo earneſt in addreſſing to their fears, and warning them to flee from it? If it were as likely they ſhould obtain faith in Chriſt, without perceiving the miſery of their preſent condition, as by being in an awakened ſtate of mind, diſcovering to them their abſolute need of a Savior, why all this expence of labor to excite in their minds a ſenſe of ſin and guilt? It muſt ſurely be of ſome ſervice, in order to faith in Chriſt, to have produced in us ſuch a perception of our periſhing circumſtances, as may diſpoſe us to look out for help: Otherwiſe, it will be difficult to point out the ſpecial pertinency of John's office, as God's meſſenger, "to prepare the way" for a reception of Chriſt as the Savior of ſinners.

And our Savior himſelf both began, and carried on, his public miniſtry, by uſing "means" to prepare

* Matth. 3. 7,——12.

prepare his hearers for, and perſuade them to, a cordial reception of "the truth". Tis accordingly obſervable, he did not think it enough "barely to preach the goſpel", but called upon men to "believe it"; at the ſame time, exhibiting to their view "ſuch evidence" of the divinity of his miſſion, and the truth of what he taught, as was naturally and powerfully adapted to awaken their attention, and diſpoſe and engage them to give credit to the meſſages he delivered to them. No one can reaſonably doubt of this, who has ever been at the pains to read the writings of the Evangeliſts. We are there told of the numerous miracles, which our Lord wro't upon the ſick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, the deaf, the poſſeſſed of the devil, yea, upon the dead in raiſing them to life; and that he performed theſe miraculous works, that men might believe in him as the Meſſiah, the promiſed Savior. But what occaſion was there for theſe exertments of almighty power, if no means were to be uſed with men in order to faith? Or if their attending to them was neither their duty, nor "the way", in which they might expect to be wro't upon to believe? Our Savior certainly had it in view, by "the miracles, wonders and ſigns, which he did in the midſt of the Jews, to approve himſelf a man of God among them". And, if he did theſe works of wonder to give credit to his character as one ſent of God, it would be highly reproachful to him, either not to look upon them as a well-fited means to anſwer this end, or not to eſteem it the duty of thoſe, who were favor'd with them, to pay a due regard to them; endeavouring, in "this way", to become convinced of the truth of his pretenſions

and

and doctrine. Had our Lord "barely declared the truth, leaving it wholly with God to make converts", it might have been tho't, that men had nothing to do but wait for the exertment of his power to work faith in them. But his conduct was quite the reverse of this. Besides "declaring the truth", he offered such evidence to convince his hearers, that it was the truth, as left them not only inexcusable, but exposed to a heavier damnation than other men, if they would not attend to it, that they might be convinced by it. So he told the people of Capernaum, who continued in unbelief, notwithstanding "the mighty works he had done among them". Says he, to them, "it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for you".* With what pertinency, I may rather say, with what justice, could our Lord thus address to these people, if, after he had done so many wondrous works among them, to engage their attention, and persuade them to believe in him, it was not their duty to exert either their wills, understandings, or any power either of their souls or bodies, in order to faith? If it lay wholly with God, without these means, or any other, or any endeavours of their's, to bestow it on them? Was it true, that their using care and diligence in seriously and thoroughly examining into the force of these proofs of our Lord's character, with earnest prayer to the God of all grace that they might be led into a right judgment upon them, was not "the way" to obtain faith, any more than if they sat still and did nothing, why are they blamed for their unbelief? What should make it a damning

* Matth. 11. 24.

ning ſin in them? Theſe are difficult queſtions, and, as I imagine, impoſſible to be anſwered upon the impleaded ſuppoſition. The plain truth is, to ſay, that human endeavours, in the uſe of means, is not "the way", under the Spirit's influence, in order to faith, is virtually, and in reality of ſenſe, to ſay, that our Savior needleſly uſed means with men that they might become believers; that they will not be blame-worthy, ſhould they ſtupidly neglect to give theſe means a ſerious conſideration; and that they deſerve no puniſhment, much leſs an aggravated one, for any folly, or ſin, they are hereby chargeable with. I ſee not, but theſe conſequences are ſtrictly juſt; and that even the Scribes and Phariſees of old muſt ſtand juſtified in all their perverſe ſtubbornneſs, in oppoſition to Chriſt and his goſpel, if the "only way" to faith is to wait, without any endeavours, in the uſe of any means, till we are made the ſubjects of it. The whole miniſtry of our Savior certainly proceded upon the contrary ſuppoſition, that *means* are to be uſed with men in order to faith, that men muſt themſelves give "due attention" to theſe means, and that this is "the ordinary way", and the only one, in which they may reaſonably hope to become believers in chriſtianity, to the ſaving of their ſouls.

And the apoſtles contented themſelves, no more than their maſter and Lord, with laying before men the ſimple truth of the goſpel", as "the only way" to faith. Beſides "preaching the truth", they endeavoured to do that alſo which might have a natural aptitude, a rational tendency, under the divine bleſſing, to beget faith in their hearers,

hearers. When the apoſtle Paul went into a ſynagogue at Theſſalonica to preach to the Jews, he not only declared * "that Jeſus was the Chriſt", that he "had ſuffered", and "roſe again from the dead"; but "reaſoned with them out of the ſcriptures" upon theſe heads: "Opening", as well as "alledging, that Jeſus was the Chriſt, and that he muſt needs have ſuffered, and roſe again from the dead". † And this was "his manner", the method he uſually took. And ſurely, he hereby meant to uſe a proper and well ſuited means to convince their underſtandings, and perſuade them to believe the truth. But if it did not lie with them to attend to his reaſoning, and conſider his arguments; or, if their doing this, in the beſt manner they could, had no tendency towards their becoming believers in Chriſt, he moſt certainly took a great deal of pains for nothing. This conduct of this apoſtle very evidently ſhows, that reaſoning with unbelievers is not only a proper, but the true "ſcripture-way", in order to their having faith. And if ſo, that conſideration, attention, and a readineſs to receive conviction upon good evidence, are ſuitable and fit, and indeed "the way" in which the divine bleſſing may be expected: Otherwiſe, 'twill be hard to account for this behavior of the apoſtle Paul.

And Philip, upon his being driven away from Jeruſalem, by reaſon of the perſecution that had been raiſed againſt the church there, not only "preached Chriſt" to the city of Samaria; ‡ but "caſt out unclean ſpirits out of many that were poſſeſſed with them, and healed many that had been

* Acts 17. 3. † Ver. 2. ‡ Acts 8. 5.

been taken with palſies, and were lame". * And tis obſerved, by the ſacred hiſtorian, " that the people, with one accord, gave heed to thoſe things which Philip ſpake, *hearing and ſeeing the miracles which he did*". † If theſe miracles had no rational tendency, no moral aptitude, to awaken the conſideration of theſe Samaritans, and diſpoſe them, with greater readineſs, to hearken to what he ſaid to them, why did he work them? And why is their attention attributed, under God, to their " ſeeing and hearing them"? He certainly did more than " declare the ſimple truth". And what he did was evidently deſigned, by God, to prepare their minds for the reception of the truth; which was altogether needleſs, if no previous preparation was in the leaſt uſeful, and it might as well have been expected, God ſhould have given them faith without, as with it.

In agreement with this conduct of Philip, tis obſervable, after the apoſtles had been commiſſioned to " go into all the world, and preach the goſpel"; that is, declare the ſimple ſaving truth; they received expreſs orders from Chriſt himſelf " to tarry at Jeruſalem until they were endued with power from on high", ‡ that is, with power from heaven to work miracles. They accordingly tarried in the city of Jeruſalem; and, " on the day of Pentecoſt", they were endued with this power: For they were " filled with the holy Ghoſt", and, in conſequence hereof, " began to ſpeak with other tongues", ſo as that " devout men out of every nation under heaven heard them ſpeak every man in his own language". § And

* Ver. 7. † Ver. 6. ‡ Luk. 24. 49. § Acts 2. 4, 5, 6.

what was the effect? The minds of many were awakened to attention, and in "this way" prepared to hearken to what they had to say. Upon which, the apoſtle Peter preached a long ſermon to them, wherein he not only declared, that "that ſame Jeſus whom they had crucified, was the Chriſt"; but endeavoured, by clear and ſtrong reaſoning, both from "propheſie" and "miricles", to make it beyond diſpute evident, that he really was ſo; as may be ſeen at large in the ſecond chapter of the Acts. More was here done than laying before the hearers "the ſaving truth". Proper care was taken, and ſuitable means uſed, both to rouſe their attention, and ſet the evidence of our Lord's character in a clear and convincing point of light. The apoſtles had it in their view to make believers of theſe Jews. And "the way" they took, in order to it, was not meerly to tell them, that "Jeſus was the Meſſiah"; but to exhibit alſo ſuch evidence in proof of it, as was wiſely and powerfully adapted to produce in their minds a conviction of this truth. And it appears, from what follows, that they took the right method. For, upon their giving ſuch undeniable proof, "that Jeſus was both Chriſt & Lord", great numbers were ſo "pricked in their hearts", as to be put upon inquiring, with ſober ſerioufneſs, "what ſhall we do"?

It may be worth remarking here, tho' the diſtreſſed ſtate of mind theſe hearers of Peter were now in, ſignified by their being "pricked in their hearts", was owing to the credit they gave to the "truth," as preached by this apoſtle, and confirmed with irrefragable evidence; yet no one knows,

knows, or is capable of knowing, that their faith *now* was of the juſtifying kind. Tis true, "three thouſand" of theſe hearers, upon being "added to the church, continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtle's doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers".* But this they might do, collectively conſidered; while yet, ſpeaking of each one individually, they migh not. Or, ſhould it be ſuppoſed, that every individual, conſtituting this collective body, "continued ſtedfaſt", tis far from being certain, or indeed ſo much as probable, that their faith, when firſt b o't under diſtreſs, was of the ſaving kind. It might, under the influence of the Spirit, if not different from their's who periſh, be productive of this conviction; they might alſo, in virtue of it, be "added to the church", and "have fellowſhip with the apoſtles in breaking of bread, and in prayers"; and further ſtill, this faith of their's, tho' ſhort, at preſent, of that which is ſaving, might afterwards, under the ſpecial illuminations of the Spirit, n their uſe of the inſtitutions of chriſtianity, become that "faith by which the juſt do live", and re "continued ſtedfaſt". And this, perhaps, was no uncommon caſe in thoſe primitive times; nor has it been in other ages ſince. Upon which, t is natural to obſerve the propriety of their joing in an attendance on the inſtitutions of the hriſtian religion, who have ſo much faith in its ivine origin, as to be herefrom pierced in their inds from a ſenſe of ſin and guilt, and put upon nquiring, "what ſhall we do"? They ſhould, in onformity to the pattern here ſet us by the apole, be directed to be "baptiſed in the name of

Jeſus

* Acts 2. 41, 42.

Jeſus Chriſt", if they have not been baptiſed already; and alſo to join in fellowſhip with chriſtians "in breaking of bread, and in prayers", and in an attendance on all the duties of piety. If their faith is not as yet ſaving, this is a proper means in order to its becoming ſo, and, as I imagine, the beſt they can be adviſed to.

I SHALL not think it a needleſs going out of my way, to take ſome notice here, before I proceed, of the compaſſion of Jeſus Chriſt towards thoſe, who had ſo much faith in natural, or revealed religion, or both, as to be in diſtreſs of ſoul from a ſenſe of ſin and guilt. Do we ever find him telling this kind of perſons, their anxiety was needleſs? There was no need of any ſuch ſollicitude—It anſwered no purpoſe—They might as well be without it—There was no difference between them, and the moſt careleſs and ſecure ſinners on this ſide hell, as to the likelihood of their finding the ſaving truth. Far from giving any ſuch inſinuations, he always treated them with ſingular tenderneſs; directing them, in the moſt endearing manner, to the only way in which they could find relief.

TIS accordingly obſervable, thoſe who "labor, and are heavy-laden", are particularly told, by the merciful Jeſus, where to go that they may "find reſt".* It would give but a poor jejune ſenſe to his words, ſhould we explain them meerly, or only, of a "reſt" by the goſpel from thoſe ceremonious rites, which were "a yoke" that neither the then Jews, nor their fathers, "were able to bear".

* Matth. 11. 28.

bear". Tis more honorable to our Savior to ſuppoſe, he is here principally ſpeaking of thoſe, who labor'd under a ſenſe of guilt, ſuch a ſenſe of it as filled their minds with fears that were grievouſly burdenſome. Sinners therefore, that have "only ſo much faith" as to be awaken'd to ſee, and feel, the greatneſs of their guilt and danger, are here called upon, as it were by name, to repair to Chriſt, in whom they may find eaſe, by being freed from their guilt, and put into a ſtate of ſafety reſpecting another world. And tis ſurely an advantage to be in this ſtate of mind, rather than in a ſtupid and inſenſible one, if thoſe, who have been bro't into it, are particularly taken notice of by the Savior of men, and invited to "go to him" that they may find reſt unto their ſouls".

THIS ſame kind of ſinners, pointed out by another metaphor, are, in like manner, mercifully directed, by Chriſt himſelf, to go to him for the ſupply of their ſpiritual wants. "In the laſt day, the great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and cried, ſaying, If any man thirſt, let him come to me and drink". * "If any man thirſt". The perſons here deſcribed are thoſe, who are in pain and diſtreſs, thro' anxious tho'ts and cares about their condition in the future world. The deſcription is certainly applicable to ſuch. Where there is the want of juſtifying faith, there may be a "thirſt", and a very ſevere one too; that is, an uneaſy diſtreſſed ſtate of mind, reſembling that of the body when a man craves drink, and is greatly pained for want of it. And this kind of

 thirſt

* Joh. 7. 37.

thirſt is more proper to ſinners who are not believers to ſalvation, than to thoſe that are. Hence that remark of our Savior, " he that believeth on me ſhall never thirſt".* And again, " whoſoever drinketh of the water which I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt". † This ſpiritual water, when ſpiritually drank off, quenches the flame which before occaſioned the thriſt. Our Lord therefore propoſes to thoſe " who thirſt, to come to him, and drink", as that which would quench their thirſt, that is, remove their uneaſineſs by removing the cauſe of it.

THE ſame kind of ſinners ſtill are chiefly meant by the " broken-hearted and bruiſed", for whoſe relief our Savior ſeems particularly concern'd. We are told, that he read, in the ſynagouge at Nazareth, thoſe words of the prophet Iſaiah, ‡ " the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor, he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of ſight to the blind, to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". § Upon which, having cloſed the book, he ſaid, " this day is this ſcripture fulfilled in your ears " ‖ He was the perſon pointed out in this prophecy; and it was fulfilled in his coming upon this merciful deſign, among others, " to heal the broken-hearted", and " to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed? The heart may, with all propriety, be ſaid to be " broken", and "bruiſed", when in a ſtate of anxious fear and diſtreſſing concern,

* Joh. 6. 35. † Chap. 4. 14. ‡ Chap. 61. 1
§ Luk. 4. 18, 19. ‖ Ver. 21.

concern, from a ſenſe of ſin and wrath. And this ſcripture, which was fulfilled by the miniſtry of our Savior principally reſpects ſinners, whoſe hearts are, as it were, broken and bruiſed with painful ſenſations from their expoſedneſs to the curſe of the law, and the wrath of God. For they eminently are the perſons, who want to be "healed of their broken hearts", and to be "ſet at liberty from their ſpiritual bruiſes". This has been already done for juſtified believers.—But to leave this digreſſion, if it ſhould be ſo called, and to go on,

NOT only were "means" uſed by our Savior, and his apoſtles, with ſinners as "the way" in order to faith, which, in the nature of the thing, ſuppoſes it to be their duty to pay a due regard to them, as they would hope to be the ſubjects of this faith; but they are repreſented, in the ſacred books, as being "more or leſs prepared", in a "better or worſe ſtate of mind", for the reception of the truth, upon the uſe of means with them.

REMARKABLE to this purpoſe are thoſe words of our Savior to the ſcribe, who "anſwered diſcreetly" to what he had been ſaying, "thou art not far from the kingdom of God".* If he was no nearer than he would have been, had he anſwered fooliſhly as one that was under the intire influence of falſe notions of God, and his commandments, what intelligible meaning can be put upon theſe words? They very obviouſly import our Lord's approbation of what he ſaid concerning

* Mark 12. 34.

the divine being, and the divine law; that he eſteemed him leſs prejudiced, more knowing, and better prepared to hearken to the doctrine of the Goſpel, than many of his profeſſion, or than he himſelf might have been heretofore; and that he was, in this view of his character, not at ſo great a diſtance from the kingdom of God as he might have been, and as many others actually were.* Not to be far from a thing means, if it means any thing at all, not to be at the greateſt diſtance from it, to be nearer to it than it is ſuppoſeable one might be, or than others are. But if this ſcribe, notwithſtanding his "diſcreet anſwer", and the unprejudiced teachable diſpoſition thereby diſcovered, was at the SAME DISTANCE from the kingdom of God, he would have been, had he diſcovered groſs ignorance, prejudice and perverſeneſs, with what propriety could our Savior declare concerning him, that he "was not far from the kingdom of God". Surely, he does not mean by this ſaying, that he was at as great a diſtance as any of the ſcribes and phariſees, in that day! If he meant thus, he has certainly expreſſed himſelf in a manner not at all adapted to convey

* Our author has ſaid, in order to ward off the force of this text, "Jeſus often put the queſtion, in ſuch a "manner, to his adverſaries, as to extort diſcreet an-"ſwers from them. A man may be very near the "kingdom of God in point of argument, who is "very far from it in every other reſpect". Pag. 341. This, as I judge, is the leaſt plauſibly ſaid of any thing in his letters. Could he have given our Lord's words a better turn, in favor of his cauſe, I doubt not he would have done it. I have no other return to make, as I think what he has offered deſerves no other, than that of his, upon another occaſion, "let it avail with whom it may avail".

convey his ſenſe. His intention, ſo far as we may judge of it from the moſt obvious and natural import of his words, muſt have been to repreſent this ſcribe, in conſequence of the diſpoſition he diſcovered, as really "nearer the kingdom of God" than others, who were of a worſe diſpoſition; or than himſelf would have been, had their diſpoſition been his. And tis from hence evident, beyond all reaſonable diſpute, that tis not a matter of indifferency, in order to the obtainment of faith, what ſtate of mind ſinners are in, when the truths of the goſpel are preſented to their view. They may be in ſuch an one as will argue the utmoſt diſtance from the kingdom of God; or they may be ſo diſpoſed and prepared as to be at a leſs diſtance; yea, "not far from it", as was the caſe of this ſcribe.

THERE is another ſaying of our Savior, of the like import with this we have been upon, and that may reflect ſtill more light upon it. Tis his declaration to a number of the jewiſh prieſts and elders in theſe words, "verily, I ſay unto you, that the publicans, and the harlots, go into the kingdom of God before you". * If, in order to that faith which admits into God's kingdom, the minds of ſinners need no previous preparation, but this faith may be, and always is, beſtowed ſo as to ſuperſede any thing of this kind, theſe jewiſh prieſts might as readily have gone into the kingdom of God, as the publicans and harlots: Nor would there have been any juſt reaſon to ſuggeſt, much leſs to ſay with ſuch poſitive aſſeveration, that the latter would go into it before the former.

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* Matth. 21. 31.

One would naturally ſuppoſe, from this ſaying of our Lord, that theſe prieſts & elders were in a more blind, hardened and perverſe ſtate of mind, than the publicans and harlots; and leſs fited, on this account, for a reception of the goſpel, in the "ordinary way" in which God enables perſons to receive it. And from what follows, it very evidently appears, that this was the real truth of the caſe. Our Lord goes on, "for John came unto you in the way of righteouſneſs, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him: And ye, when ye had ſeen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe him". * This ſame tho't is expreſſed more ſtrongly by the evangeliſt Luke. † "And the publicans juſtified God, being baptiſed with the baptiſm of John; but the phariſees and lawyers rejected the counſel of God againſt themſelves, being not baptiſed of him". The plain truth is, John, the meſſenger of God to prepare the way for the Meſſiah, had endeavoured to awaken the fears of theſe jewiſh rulers, and excite in them a diſpoſition that would render the coming of Chriſt acceptable to them; but he could make no impreſſion on them, tho' what he ſaid wro't powerfully upon the publicans and harlots. They were therefore more obſtinate and perverſe, and for that reaſon leſs likely, in the "uſual way" of God's dealing with ſinners, to become the ſubjects of the Meſſiah's kingdom. And this our Lord very emphatically repreſents in Luke 7, from the 31ſt to the 35th ver. where he ſeems to be at a loſs to deſcribe their obſtinacy, and ſcarcely to know by what compariſon to point out their perverſeneſs, in not being wro't upon by one

* Ver. 32, 33. † Luk. 7. 29, 30.

one way of teaching or another. As children in a froward peeviſh humor, when playing together, do every thing contrary to what their companions deſire and expect: So they interpreted croſſly every thing that was ſaid or done, either by John the forerunner of Chriſt, or by Chriſt himſelf. No arguments could perſuade them, no manner of behavior remove their unjuſt prejudices. Tis quite evident, from what our Lord has thus ſaid of the obſtinacy, inſenſibility and perverſe ſpirit of theſe jewiſh teachers, that they were, upon this account, leſs fited and prepared to be wro't upon to come into his kingdom, than the publicans and harlots, who, being not ſo hardened, were more eaſily ſuſceptible of good impreſſions, and therefore more likely, according to the "common way" of God's dealing with ſinners, to go into his kingdom before them.

And the ſcripture proceeds upon this ſame tho't, whenever it ſpeaks, as it often does, of a greater difficulty in the way of the converſion and ſalvation of ſome ſinners than of others. There are many texts to this purpoſe. The recovery of one "accuſtomed to do evil" is compar'd to the "ethiopian's changing his ſkin, and the leopard his ſpots"; denoting the extreme difficulty of the thing; * a "rich man's entering into the kingdom of God" is laid to be harder, than for a "camel to go thro' the eye of a needle". † Tis affirmed of the man, "into whom the unclean ſpirit entered, after he had been caſt out", that "the laſt ſtate of that man is worſe than the firſt"; ‡ that is, he would be more hardened in ſin,

* Jer. 13. 23. † Matth. 19. 24. ‡ Matt. 12. 43, 44, 45.

ſin, and, for that reaſon, in greater hazard of periſhing in infidelity. Tis, in like manner, declared of thoſe, who, having "eſcaped the pollutions of the world thro' the knowlege of the Lord and Savior Jeſus Chriſt, are again entangled therein and overcome", that "the latter end with them is worſe than the begining", that is, they are in a worſe ſtate, a more difficult and dangerous one, reſpecting their ſouls and ſalvation. * And tis alſo remarked of thoſe, who were "once enlightned, and had taſted of the good word of God", that if they ſhould "fall away",

* 2 Pet. 2. 20.

† It may be worthy of notice here, the ſcribes and phariſees are told by our Savior, upon occaſion of their imputing a miraculous work he had wro't, to his confederacy with Belzebub, that "this blaſphemy againſt him", however ſinful, "might be forgiven"; but if they ſhould thus blaſphemouſly ſpeak againſt the holy Ghoſt", by maliciouſly attributing the miracles, which would ſoon be wro't by power communicated from him, to the influence of the devil, they ſhould never be forgiven", Matth. 12. 31, 32. And why? Surely, not for want of power, or mercy in God; power to ſubdue their obſtinacy, or mercy to triumph over their unworthineſs; nor yet, for want of merit in the atoning blood of Jeſus Chriſt: But becauſe they would, in this caſe, withſtand the higheſt evidence, the wiſdom of God ſaw fit to lay before them for their conviction; which evidence was "the way", and the "only one", by which, as a means, he would work the work of faith in them. So that men, by the increaſe of their obſtinacy in ſin, may increaſe the "improbability" of their being ſavingly wro't upon; yea, they may become ſo hardened and perverſe, as to be beyond the poſſibility of obtaining this mercy. It were to be wiſhed, ſinners were more ſeriouſly tho'tful of the danger of hardening themſelves in iniquity.

away", it would be "impoſſible to renew them again to repentance"; importing the vaſt difficulty of the thing. * The pertinency of theſe and ſuch like texts very evidently turns upon this tho't, that tis eaſier, not in regard of the power of almighty God, conſidered ſimply in itſelf; but in regard of his "uſual method" of exerting it, in the buiſineſs of ſalvation, to effect the converſion of ſome ſinners, than of others; and that the ſame ſinners may, at different times, be at a nearer, or greater, diſtance from the kingdom of God, and more or leſs likely to enter into it, as they are more or leſs ſtupid and hardened, more or leſs fited and prepared for divine teachings and impreſſions. If one ſtate of mind is no more adapted to a reception of the goſpel than another; if the ſtupidly ſecure and hardened in impenitency are in a diſpoſition as well fited for the beſtowment of faith, as the awaken'd and deeply concern'd about their ſins; and are as near to it, and may as probably obtain it, there would be no reaſonable room to ſay, that the converſion of one ſinner was at all more difficult than the converſion of another, or that the ſame ſinner was in a worſe ſtate now than at any time heretofore; the reverſe of all which is moſt apparently the purport of the above texts: Nor can they be underſtood, in any intelligible ſenſe, unleſs we conſtrue them ſo as to take this into their meaning. †

UNDER

* Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.

† If the affirmations, in the above quoted texts, may be received as faithful ſayings, what muſt we think of our author's, ſo frequently repeated in his letters, in which he ridicules thoſe who ſpeak of ſome ſinners, as under a greater probability of obtaining mercy than others?

UNDER this head, thoſe texts alſo may properly be bro't to view which teach us, that ſinners

others? In which he declares he "can ſee no difference between careleſs and convicted ſinners", ſuggeſting, that it would be "like an impertinent ſarcaſm" to tell the latter, they were in "a more hopeful way"! In which he puts the moſt hardened rebels, the vileſt proſtitutes, the moſt notorious criminals, upon "a level with ſinners who have been awaken'd to a ſerious ſenſe of religion, and an earneſt care of ſeeking God, as to "the likelihood of their finding the ſaving truth? Which, as he ſays, needs no preparative", but "comes to men always unſent for; not meeting them inquiring after it, but overtaking them when running away", page 84. 293. His zeal to ſerve ſome deſign or other has certainly carried him far beyond the truth; not ſuffering him to exhibit it, in the plain ſimple manner, in which it lies open to view in the ſacred books. It is acknowledged, to the glory of the riches of God's grace, that "the juſtification of life", in the goſpel proclamation, is "equally free" to ſinners, be their character what it will; be they "virtuous ladies, or the vileſt proſtitutes; the moſt revered judges, or the moſt odious criminals, receiving the juſt ſentence of death from their mouths; the moſt fervent devotees, or the greateſt ringleaders in prophaneſs and exceſs"; inſomuch that nothing is wanting, in regard of any of them, but "faith in Jeſus Chriſt", in order to their being actually intereſted in this ineſtimable mercy. Upon their "believing in him whom God hath ſent", they ſhall, be they who they will, or their former obſtinacy in ſin what it will, be inſtantly accepted of God, and with an equal welcome. There is no reaſonable room for diſpute as to this, tis ſo evidently the truth of revelation. But where is it ſaid, in the inſpired books, or ſo much as inſinuated, that there is no difference between one ſinner and another, as to "the probability" of their thus becoming believers? Where are we told, that ſinners are "as much in the way to faith", while running

ners, by going on in their iniquities, in oppoſition to the checks of conſcience, and the warnings of God

ning from God as faſt as they can, as when they are endeavouring, in the uſe of means, to come to him? Where is it declared to be "as likely" they ſhould meet with "the gift of grace", while going on ſecurely in a courſe of the groſſeſt impiety, unrighteouſneſs and intemperance, as if, being rouſed to a ſenſe of ſin and danger, they ſhould be earneſtly engaged in "inquiring after God that they might find him"? This is the doctrine of our author. But while he is ſo ſtrenuous in teaching, that there is no difference between ſinners, as to "the likelihood" of their becoming believers; but that the vileſt and moſt abandoned wretches are in "as fair a way", as any ſinners whatever, to meet with the ſaving truth, he ought to know, that he herein oppoſes, not the popular preachers only, but Jeſus Chriſt and his inſpired apoſtles. For this is certainly the truth, unleſs a man's being "not far from the kingdom of God" means the ſame thing with his being "at the greateſt diſtance from it"; unleſs "his going into this kingdom before others" ſignifies, that thoſe others are "not at all behind him" as to this goſpel privilege; unleſs his being "in a worſe ſtate", reſpecting his obtainment of ſaving mercy, "than he once was" imports, that he is in "as good a one as he ever was"; unleſs its "being difficult", next to "impoſſible", that he ſhould be "renew'd to repentance", if he relapſes after he has been illuminated and taſted of the good word, conveys this idea, that tis "as eaſie and as likely he ſhould be now bro't to repentance as it was at firſt". What ſad work ſhall we make of the ſacred books, if we force them to ſpeak at this rate? And yet, thus our author muſt make them ſpeak, or there will be a palpable contradiction between what he ſays, and what they ſay. He may poſſibly imagine he is doing honor to God, by exalting the riches and freedom of his grace; but neither the one, nor the other, can be truly exalted, by telling

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God in his word, may be totally left of him, and given up to the influence of their luſts, ſo as that their continuance in life ſhall iſſue, not in the obtainment of faith, but their "treaſuring up to themſelves wrath, againſt the day of wrath". To this purpoſe are the words of the Pſalmiſt, * "my people would not hearken to my voice, and Iſrael would have none of me: So I gave them up unto their own hearts luſts; and they walked in their own counſels". In agreement herewith, the apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of thoſe, who had "changed the glory of God into an image, made like to corruptable man", ſays, † "wherefore, God alſo gave them up to uncleaneſs, thro' the luſts of their heart". And again, ‡ "for this cauſe, God gave them up to vile affections". And this ſame apoſtle, propheſying of thoſe, who, in after-times, "would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be ſaved", ſays, § "for this cauſe, God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs". Surely, theſe texts import the awfully ſad condition of the ſinners, pointed out in them, beyond that of others. But what ſinners are they? Will it be ſaid they are thoſe, whoſe conſciences are quick and tender? Whoſe concern

* Pſal. 81. 11, 12. † Rom. 1. 23, 24.
‡ Ver. 26. § 2 Theſſ. 2. 11, 12.

men who are hardening themſelves in wickedneſs as much as they can, that they are "as much in the way" of the ſaving truth, and "as likely" to find it, as the moſt ſerious, concerned and inquiſitive ſeekers after it. If this is not that encouraging men "to continue in ſin that grace may abound", which the apoſtle Paul repels with "a God forbid" 'tis not eaſie to ſay what is.

concern about eternal life is pungent & preſſing ? Who earneſtly ſeek God, if perhaps they may find him, and are importunate in their applications to him, night and day, to take pity on them ? Can it be ſuppoſed, that ſuch ſinners as theſe are judicially given up of God to "hardneſs of heart", and "blindneſs of mind" ? That he has "caſt them away from his preſence, and taken his holy ſpirit from them" ? May it not rather be ſaid, that the good Spirit is actually ſtriving with them ? And that the ſtate of mind they are in is the effect of his influence upon them ? Certainly, theſe are not the ſinners that are given up of God, ſo as that the "ſaving truth" ſhall not be communicated to them. They are thoſe, on the contrary, who are ſecurely impious and prophane, openly vile and wicked, or ſecretly ſo under the cloke of religion ; they are thoſe, who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, go on in a courſe of mocking heaven by their religious hypocriſie, or of trampling on the divine authority, by giving a looſe to their luſts, commiting all manner of iniquity with greedineſs. Hence the many paſſages, in the ſacred books, which caution ſinners "not to grieve the Spirit" ; not "to reſiſt the holy Ghoſt" ; not "to harden their hearts" ; not to "depart from God", but to "take heed leſt they be hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin". It is too evident, from ſuch texts as theſe, to admit of a denyal, that there is a "difference" between ſinners, as to the "probability" of their finding mercy ; and that ſome are in a "more hopeful way" in order to it, than others. And tis, in conſequence of the real and juſt import of the ſacred texts that have been mentioned, that ſinners may,

with all propriety, be called upon, and exhorted, and in a preſſing manner too, inſtantly to come to a ſtop, and not proceed a ſtep further in their evil ways, leſt there ſhould be "leſs likelihood" afterwards, than there is at preſent, of their finding "the ſalutary truth".

BESIDES what has been already ſaid, I may properly remind you of thoſe numerous paſſages, in the inſpired books, which expreſly direct ſinners to the diligent uſe of endeavours as "the way" to God's ſaving mercy in Jeſus Chriſt.

IN general, they are called upon to "conſider their ways" ; * to "remember, bring to mind, and ſhew themſelves men".† They are called upon "to receive the inſtructions of wiſdom, and not ſilver ; and knowledge rather than choice gold" ; ‡ to "cry after knowledge, and lift up their voice for underſtanding ; to ſeek her as ſilver, and ſearch for her as for hid treaſures". § They are called upon to be "aſhamed and confounded for their evil ways" ; ‖ to "know, and ſee, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that they have forſaken the Lord" ; ¶ to acknowlege their iniquity in tranſgreſſing againſt him", *† and to "amend their ways and their doings, ceaſing from doing evil". §§ They are called upon to "ſeek the Lord, and his ſtrength" ; ** to "ſeek the Lord while he may be found" ; ‡‡ and to "draw nigh to God", for that "he will draw nigh to them". ¶‖ In a word, they are called upon to "do

* Hag. 1. 5, 7. † Iſa. 44. 8. ‡ Prov. 8. 10
§ Prov. 2. 3, 4. ‖ Ezek. 36. 32. ¶ Jer. 2. 19.
*† Jer. 3. 13. §§ Iſai. 1. 16. Jer. 7. 3. ** Pſal. 105. 4.
‡‡ Iſai. 55. 6. ¶‖ Jam. 4. 8.

" do with their might whatſoever their hands find to do", as there is " no work, nor device in the grave, whither they are going" ;* to " labor, not for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to everlaſting life" ; † to " enter in at the ſtrait gate" ; ‡ yea, to " ſtrive", exert themſelves with the utmoſt ſtrength & vigor, to" enter in at this ſtrait gate", as " many will ſeek to enter in, & will not be able".§ Can it be imagined, after ſuch calls and exhortations, ſo frequently repeated, and preſſingly urged, upon ſinners, that they have nothing to do, till they are made the ſubjects of " ſaving faith" ? They very ſolemnly command their endeavours, in the uſe of means ; and not only ſo, but moſt evidently point them out as " the way" in which the work of God is ordinarily " begun", as well as carried on, in them : Nor can it be reaſonably tho't, that the inſpired writers, in all parts of the bible, in the new as well as old teſtament, would have thus commanded and urged men to exert themſelves, if all exertments of their's would be totally uſeleſs to any ſaving good ; as not falling in with " the way of God" in communicating the gift of faith. It would be a diſhonorable reflection on them to ſuppoſe, they ſhould be chargeable with ſo groſs an inconſiſtency.

Tis true, ſinners cannot, in their own ſtrength, do any thing to purpoſe in the buiſineſs of religion ; but, thro' Chriſt's " ſtrengthening them, they can do all things". And if the uſe of their endeavours is " the way", in which God is pleaſed

* Eccl. 9. 10. † Joh. 6. 27. ‡ Matt. 7. 13.
§ Luk. 13. 24

to communicate the aids of his Spirit, theſe endeavours, however weak, inſufficient and contemptible in themſelves, become, in this view of them, greatly ſerviceable ; yea, they are of ſuch neceſſary importance, that ſinners may periſh without them : And ſhould they periſh, they muſt juſtifie God, and blame themſelves : Whereas, if God beſtows "ſaving faith" without human endeavours, and ſo as to render them vain and uſeleſs, it will be hard to point out the reaſonableneſs, or fitneſs, of the above numerous ſcripture-exhortations and commands ; and ſtill harder to reconcile them with the juſtice of God, much more his goodneſs and mercy, in the aggravated damnation of impenitents under the goſpel.

I MAY go on, and ſay ſtill more particularly, that ſinners are directed, in the ſacred books, to the duty of "prayer" ; and this, as "the way" to obtain ſaving mercy. Simon Magus was, without all doubt, a ſinner, and a very great one too. For the apoſtle Peter ſaid to him, "I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity".* And yet, he exhorts him to "pray God if perhaps the tho't of his heart might be forgiven him".† And ſhall we ſay, an apoſtle of Chriſt would have put him upon doing that, which was perfectly uſeleſs, in regard of the main thing he had in view in giving him this direction? Surely, he would not have adviſed him to "pray", if prayer had not been, in his apprehenſion, "the way" in which God was wont to beſtow his mercy in Chriſt. The people of Iſrael were in the like ſinful ſtate, when God was pleaſed to declare that

* Acts 8. 23. † Ver. 22.

that to be his purpoſe concerning them, "a new heart will I give unto you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh". * But what follows? "Thus ſaith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them". † It was in "the way" of prayer for a new heart, and a new ſpirit, that God would beſtow theſe bleſſings, and in no other. And prayer is a duty our Savior has directed to, as "the way" in which the divine Spirit is given to beget, as well as increaſe grace. In what other ſenſe ſhall we explain thoſe words of his? "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened to you". ‡ Were they addreſſed to thoſe only, who were the ſubjects of the "faith by which the juſt do live"? Far from this; they were delivered, together with the whole ſermon of which they are a part, to "great multitudes" (οχλοις πολλοις) that followed our Lord "from Galilee, Decapolis, Jeruſalem, Judea, and from beyond Jordan". So we are authoriſed to ſay from the 28th ver. of the 7th chap. of Matthew; where it is expreſly declared, that "when Jeſus had ended theſe ſayings "the people (οι οχλοι, the multitudes) were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine", that is, the multitudes before-mentioned. It follows, in the next verſe, "and he taught THEM", that is, by neceſſary grammatical conſtruction, theſe "multitudes", who had flocked after him, from all parts of the country. It was therefore in the hearing of a mixt and great number of perſons, from all parts, among whom, perhaps, there were few,

 who

* Ezek. 36. 26. † Ver 37. ‡ Matt. 7. 7.

who had obtained the juſtification of life thro' faith, that our Lord ſaid, " aſk, and it ſhall be given you ; ſeek, and ye ſhall find ; knock, and it ſhall be opened to you". And would he have thus preached to ſuch an audience, if it had not been his intention to put thoſe, who had not ſaving faith, as well as thoſe who had, upon applying to God by prayer for the influences of his Spirit ? The former to begin the work of faith in them ; the latter, to maintain, and increaſe it in their hearts. It cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed. His directing them to prayer is, indeed, in itſelf ſimply conſidered, a good reaſon why prayer ſhould be looked upon as " the way" of God in beſtowing his Spirit to the purpoſes of ſaving good. He would not otherwiſe have given this direction. It ſuppoſes the goſpel-plan of mercy, and that God may, in conſiſtency with the honor of his juſtice, holineſs and wiſdom, beſtow that grace upon ſinners they are directed to ſeek to him for, notwithſtanding their ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs, however hainouſly aggravated ; yea, it ſuppoſes God's readineſs, in " this way", to communicate his Spirit to all the valuable ends to which he is needed. *

I

* It will be obſerved, by thoſe who are in any meaſure critical, that I have all along ſpoken of the uſe of prayer and other means, as " the way" in which God is pleaſed " ordinarily" to communicate the grace that is ſaving ; purpoſely avoiding to affirm, that he has, by " direct promiſe", conſtituted ſuch a connection between the " uſe of theſe means", and the " beſtowment of ſaving grace", as that the latter ſhall certainly take place upon the former. Perhaps, this is a real truth, and as plainly revealed, in the bible, as that God, by his " promiſe", has given believers unto

I MAY not impertinently add here, that our Savior, beſides directing ſinners to the duty of prayer as "the way" to obtain ſaving mercy, has given them all deſireable encouragement to hope

 for unto life reaſon to hope, that they ſhall be ſtill "ſtronger in the grace which is in Chriſt Jeſus", upon their uſe of the means he has appointed to this end. But without inſiſting upon this, (which I have accordingly waved, as tis a matter in diſpute among the beſt and greateſt of men) all reaſonable pretence for want of encouragement to human endeavours is ſuperſeded, if the uſe of theſe is "the way" in which God "ordinarily" beſtows his ſaving mercy in Jeſus Chriſt.

The ſinner, it may be, will plead, if God has not "oblig"d himſelf to ſucceed men's endeavours; if he has no where "promiſed" that, if they exert themſelves, as they may, in the uſe of means, he will certainly reward their well-meant efforts with the communications of his grace; to what purpoſe ſhould I attempt to do any thing in the affairs of religion? What encouragement have I to do ſo? When I have done all I can, God may with-hold his grace; and then, I am but where I was, and may, notwithſtanding all my endeavours, ſuffer the pains of Hell.

Should this be ſuppoſed, would your puniſhment, in the place of "weeping and gnaſhing of teeth", be equally dreadful, whether you did your beſt in the uſe of means, or went on in your ſins, throwing contempt on the authority and government of God? There is no room for diſpute as to this. You would certainly be more miſerable beyond the grave, in proportion to your neglects of God, and the acts of your rebellion againſt him.

But (to expreſs myſelf in the words of the celebrated Mr. How.) "Why ſhouldeſt thou imagine ſo ſad "an iſſue, as that, after thine utmoſt endeavours, "grace ſhould be with-held, and leave thee to periſh, "becauſe God hath not bound himſelf by promiſe "to thee? What promiſe have the ravens to be heard,

"when

for ſucceſs in " this way". Says he, " aſk, and it ſhall be given you". Surely, he intended this declaration, as a reaſonable ground for hope, in the uſe of prayer. And as tho' he had not, in theſe

" when they cry ? But thou art a ſinner. True.—
" Yet experience tells the world, God's " unpromi-
" ſed" mercies freely flow every where. " The
" whole earth is full of his goodneſs". Yea ; " but
" his ſpecial grace is conveyed by promiſe only, and
" that only thro' Chriſt ; and how can it be commu-
" nicated, thro' him, to any but thoſe that are in
" him" ? What then : Is " the firſt in-being in
" Chriſt no ſpecial grace" ? Or is there any " being
" in him" before the " firſt", that ſhould be the
" ground of that gracious communication ? Things
" are plain enough, if we make them not intricate,
" or intangle ourſelves by fooliſh ſubtilties".—
" Poor ſoul, thou needeſt not ſtay to puzzle thyſelf
" about this matter. " God binds himſelf to do
" what he promiſes" ; but hath he any where " bound
" himſelf, to do no more" ? Did he promiſe thee thy
" being, or that thou ſhouldeſt live to this day ? Did
" he promiſe thee the bread that ſuſtains thee, the
" daily comforts of thy life ? Yea, what is nearer the
" preſent purpoſe, did he promiſe thee a ſtation under
" the Goſpel ? Or that thou ſhouldeſt ever hear the
" name of Chriſt ? If ever his ſpirit has, in any de-
" gree, moved upon thy heart, inclined thee at all
" ſeriouſly to conſider thy eternal concernments, did
" he before-hand make thee any promiſe of that "?
" My friend, conſider a little, tis HOPE that is the
" great engine that moves the world, that keeps all
" ſorts of men in action. Doth the huſbandman
" " foreknow", when he plows and ſows, that the
" crop will anſwer his coſt and pains ? Does the
" merchant " foreknow", when he imbarques his
" goods, he ſhall have a ſafe and gainful return ?
" Doſt thou " foreknow", when thou eateſt, it ſhall
" refreſh thee ? When thou takeſt phyſick, that it

" ſhall

theſe words, ſaid eno' to encourage their hope, he goes on, by a ſtriking compariſon, to reaſon the caſe with them; and he does it in the moſt convincing, as well as affecting manner. His words

" ſhall recover thy health, and ſave thy life? Yea
" further, can the covetous man pretend a " promiſe",
" that his unjuſt practices ſhall enrich him? The
" ambitious, that he ſhall be great and honourable?
" The voluptuous, that his pleaſure ſhall be always
" unmixt with gall and wormwood? Can any ſay,
" they ever had a " promiſe" to aſcertain them, that
" prophaneſs and ſenſuality would bring them to
" Heaven? That an ungodly and diſſolute life would
" end in bleſſedneſs? Here the Lord knows, men can
" be confident and active enough, without a " pro-
" miſe, and againſt many an expreſs threatning.
" Will thou not, upon the HOPE thou haſt before
" thee, do as much for thy ſoul, for eternal bleſſed-
" neſs, as men do for uncertain riches, ſhort pleaſures,
" an airy ſoon-blaſted name? Yea, as much as men
" deſperably do to damn themſelves, and purchaſe
" their own ſwift deſtruction.
" Or can'ſt thou pretend, tho' thou haſt no pre-aſſuring
" promiſe, thou haſt no HOPE? Is it nothing to
" have heard ſo much of God's gracious nature?
" Is it ſuitable to the reports, and diſcoveries he hath
" made of himſelf, to let a poor wretch periſh at his
" feet, that lies proſtrate there, expecting his mercy?
" Didſt thou ever hear, he was ſo little a lover of
" ſouls? Do his giving of his ſon, his earneſt un-
" wearied ſtrivings with ſinners, his long patience,
" the clear beams of goſpel-light, the amiable appear-
" ances of his grace, give ground for no better, no
" kinder tho'ts of him? Yea, hath he not expreſly
" ſtiled himſelf, " the God hearing prayer", taken
" a name on purpoſe to encourage " all fleſh to come
" to him"? Wilt thou dare then to adopt thoſe pro-
" phane words, " what profit is there to pray to him"?
" and ſay, tis better ſit ſtill, reſolving to periſh, than
" addreſs to him, or ſeek his favor, becauſe he hath
" not

words are theſe. * " What man is there of you, whom if his ſon aſk bread, will he give him a ſtone ? Or if he aſk a fiſh, will he give him a ſerpent ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that aſk him" ? Who, after this reaſoning of the Savior of men, can ſuſpect the willingneſs of God, upon their ſeeking to him for his Spirit, to beſtow him upon them ? If any can harbour in their breaſts jealouſies of this kind, they muſt either want the bowels of a father, or be groſly miſtaken in their notions of him, who is our father in heaven. Are we, who are parents, ready to pity our poor ſinful children, when they cry to us in diſtreſs ? Do our hearts move towards them ? Are we diſpoſed freely to give them the good thing they need, and apply to us for, wherein we are able ? And ſhall the parent of the univerſe, the father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of mercies, the God who ſo loved

* Ver. 9, 10, 11, 12.

" not " by promiſe", aſſured thee of the iſſue, and
" that, if he ſuſpends his grace, all thou doſt will be
" in vain ?

" How wouldeſt thou judge of the like reſolution ? If
" the huſbandman ſhould ſay, when I have ſpent my
" pains and coſt in breaking up and preparing the
" earth, and caſting in my ſeed ; if the ſun ſhine
" not, and the rain fall not in ſeaſon, if the influence
" of heaven be ſuſpended, if he withold his bleſſing,
" or if an invading enemy anticipate my harveſt, all
" I do and expend is to no purpoſe ; and God
" hath not aſcertained me of the contrary, by " expreſs
" promiſe" ; tis as good therefore ſit ſtill . Cenſure,
" and anſwer, him and thyſelf both together" "Bleſ-
" ſedneſs of the righteous". page 276, 277, 178.

loved ſinners, while they were ſinners, enemies, and ungodly, as to part with his own Son, out of his boſom, to ſhed his precious blood as a propitiation for their ſins; I ſay, ſhall this moſt merciful God and father be wanting in his readineſs to pity his poor ſinful children, when ſenſible of their folly in departing from him, they ardently look to him for help in making their return to him by repentance and faith? The tho't is highly diſhonorary to him, whoſe ſtile is that "the hearer of prayer", and "the God of all grace". And it likewiſe directly oppoſes the whole thread of our Savior's arguing, in this paſſage, which is evidently deſigned to give us the moſt exalted apprehenſions of the mercy of our heavenly father; ſuch as might tend to free our minds of all ſuſpicion and jealouſie, and encourage our application to him in full hope of his willingneſs and readineſs to afford us all the ſpiritual help we need, in order to our ſalvation.

ENO', I truſt, has now been ſaid to ſhow, not only what ſinners may and ought to do, towards obtaining the faith that is ſaving; but that their thus doing is the "ordinary way" in which God communicates his Spirit to effect this work of grace in them.

SERMON

SERMON X.

SEVERAL objections, and of ſome weight, may be made againſt what has been offered, in the preceding diſcourſes. My intention is, to propoſe theſe objections diſtinctly, and to give the proper anſwers to them: And, with the doing of this I ſhall conclude this ſubject I have been ſo long upon.

OBJ. I. THE firſt objection is, faith is wro't by an immediate act of God's power, in which men are only the ſubjects of what he works in them. There is no more of man in the beſtowment of faith, than there was in bringing Chriſt from heaven to be "a propitiation for the ſins of the world".

I ANSWER. Should this be the truth; ſhould it be ſuppoſed, that faith is a "gift of God", in which men are nothing more than the "paſſive recipients" of what he beſtows, it will not from hence follow, that human endeavours, in the ſenſe we have explained them, are needleſs, as being of no uſe, or ſervice. For God may, if he pleaſes, as well make awaken'd ſeeking ſinners, the

he ſubjects of this gift, as the ſtupidly tho'tleſs
nd ſecure ; he may as well diſplay his almighty
ower, in giving men to believe, while exerting
heir powers as reaſonable creatures, about their
luty, as when they make no uſe of them, but are
hamefully careleſs and indolent. It lies with him
o chuſe his own way to beſtow the gift of faith ;
nd, if he chuſes to beſtow it, rather upon inquir-
ng, ſeeking ſinners, than others ; upon men,
vhile acting like reaſonable creatures, rather than
vhile they are ſenſelesly ſiting ſtill, and doing
othing, " who ſhall ſay unto him, what doeſt
hou" ? Moſt certainly God is maſter of his
wn gifts, and may beſtow them in what way he
leaſes. And for any to diſpute this is, in reality
f conſtruction, to ſay, that God has no right to
do what he will with his own" ; tis to oppoſe
hat " ſovereignty", which, at other times, is
renuouſly pleaded for, as one of the diſtinguiſh-
g glories of the ſupreme being.

But ſhould it turn out a truth, that, in the
eſtowment of faith, men are more than the
affive ſubjects" of a gift ; that God accom-
iſhes this part of his good pleaſure in them, by
e uſe of means, and the concurring operation of
e intellectual faculties with which he has en-
owed them, what has been diſcourſed about
uman endeavours, inſtead of carrying with it the
ce of abſurdity, will at once appear moſt highly
ongruous. There is evidently, in this view of
e matter, a natural aptitude in the preſcribed
eans, and men's uſe of them, in order to the
tainment of faith. Tis in reaſon fit, they
ould exert themſelves in earneſt endeavours, if

tis

tis, by co-operating with thoſe endeavours, that God communicates the light and help, whereby faith is wro't in them. The work is now accompliſht in a way accommodated to the human make. Men are dealt with as intelligent and moral agents. For tho' tis God principally that does the work; yet, in the doing of it, he conſiders the conſtitution of men, and operates by the intervention of their faculties, and in a way adapted to their proper nature.

And this way of communicating the gift of faith appears, to me, to be moſt reaſonable in itſelf, and moſt conſonant to the ſcripture-account of the matter.

If we conſult our own reaſon, it perfectly falls in with all we are able to collect from it, to ſuppoſe, that God, in "drawing ſinners to Chriſt", ſhould do it "with the cords of a man, and the bands of love", that is, by co-operating with human faculties, in the uſe of proper means. Tis true, had men's faculties been deſtroyed by the original lapſe, or any thing conſequent thereupon, theſe faculties muſt be reſtored, if at all reſtored, by an exertment of almighty power, without their doing any thing, in any kind whatever: But, as they ſtill exiſt men, endowed with intellectual and moral powers, and capable of uſing them, it ſhould ſeem reaſonable to think, that God, when he works faith in them, ſhould do it in a way adjuſted to their character; that is, by the intervention of their faculties, in the uſe of ſuitably adapted means.

And

And this is evidently the way, the ſcripture has pointed out. Why elſe has it made faith in Jeſus Chriſt a commanded duty ? Why has it urged this duty, by declaring, that if we "believe we ſhall be ſaved", but if we "believe not we ſhall be damned" ? This does not look, as tho' faith was a work of God, ſo as that men were only the "paſſive recipients" of it, as a gift from him. They are certainly conſidered as agents, and accountable ones too, in the buiſineſs of faith. But where would be the propriety, or indeed conſiſtency, of their being viewed in this light, if faith was the work of God, ſo as to ſuperſede the intervening operation of their faculties, in the uſe of means, and endeavours ? Was this the way, in which faith was wro't, they might as well be commanded, upon pain of damnation, aggravated damnation, to bring that truth down from heaven, which is the object of faith, as to believe this truth now tis already bro't down, and revealed in the ſacred ſcriptures. Beſides, if faith was the work of God, ſo as that men are nothing more than the "paſſive ſubjects" of what he does, and all means and human endeavours, in the uſe of them are ſet aſide, as having no concurring influence, why were ſo many miracles wro't by Chriſt and his apoſtles, in confirmation of the truths they publiſhed to the world, as ſent from God ? Why are men complained of, charged with guilt, and declared worthy of an aggravated puniſhment for not being wro't upon to believe, in conſequence of theſe atteſtations from heaven, in proof of the goſpel-revelation ? Why are they applied to in all the ways that are rationally ſuited to work upon moral and intelligent agents ? It would

would be groſly abſurd thus to adreſs to them, if the " ſalutary truth" was conveyed into them, without the concurrence of their faculties, in the uſe of means.

Tis obſervable, tho' God is ſpoken of, in the ſcripture, as " the author of faith" ; yet that is the inquiry of inſpiration, * " How ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed ? And how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard ? And how ſhall they hear without a preacher" ? And that is the apoſtolic concluſion deduced herefrom, † " So then, faith coming by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". You ſee, in order to believing, there muſt be preaching, and this by perſons duly authoriſed and ſent to preach ; and the word preached muſt be heard, that is, heedfully, diligently, ſeriouſly attended to. Here then there is both room and opportunity for the exerciſe of human faculties ; and tis by the exerciſe of them, that God, by his Spirit, concurs to the production of faith. Men are " workers together with God" in this chriſtian attainment ; inſomuch, that if they neglect to exert their own powers, in the uſe of the means and advantages they are favoured with, they can reflect the blame no where, but on themſelves, if they are never made the ſubjects of that faith, by which " the juſt do live". This will be the true reaſon of their condemnation ; and it will eternally juſtifie God in it, before all angels and men.

Tis

* Rom. 10. 14, 15. † Ver. 17.

Tis a plain caſe, the ſcripture every where conſiders ſinners, as beings that are endowed with intellectual and moral powers, and accordingly repreſents God as FIRST BEGINNING, and then CARRYING ON, the work of faith, in a way analagous to their proper character as ſuch, by making uſe of "means", and by requiring "their attention" to them, and the "exertment" of all their powers, in ſubordination to him, and the concurring influences of his Spirit. He don't introduce faith into them, as into beings that are not agents; neither does he make them believers, by giving them new faculties, or by deſtroying, or effecting any phyſical change in, their old; but accompliſhes his pleaſure in them, by accommodating his agency to their proper make and conſtitution. The bible always conſiders the matter in this light. And it would, in truth, be quite unintelligible upon a contrary ſcheme of tho't.*

OBJ. II. ANOTHER objection is, to urge men, before they have faith, that is, ſaving faith, to religious doing, is to invert the ſcripture-order. Tis to make that precede, which ſhould follow after. Tis to put the effect before the cauſe. What more abſurd, than to call upon men to work in order to faith, when they can really do no work at all, till they are the ſubjects of faith? The apoſtles did not proceed after this unnatural manner. They firſt laid before men the ſimple truth of the goſpel. Some believed.—And, upon this, they put them upon endeavours to "walk in newneſs of life".

* See what is more largely ſaid, upon human endeavours in the latter part of the 12th Sermon.

How far any may have put men upon acting from faith before they had it, and in order to their having it, I will not, at preſent, take upon me to ſay; Tho' if they have really done thus, they are doubtleſs chargeable with great abſurdity. For no man can do an action from a principle he is not endowed with, and to put him upon it is to put him upon doing that which is NATURALLY IMPOSSIBLE. But this is not the caſe, as we have ſtated it. We call no man to endeavours, that will argue his being a ſubject of ſaving faith, in order to his becoming ſo. We put him upon no exertments, but from principles he is poſſeſſed of. And endeavours, from ſuch principles, in order to his obtaining ſtill higher and more noble ones, are what he is capable of; yea, God requires them, and they are "the way" (as we have ſeen) in which he "ordinarily" beſtows his Spirit to the purpoſes of ſaving and everlaſting good.

Tis true, upon men's obtaining faith, they become capable of acting from this principle; and there are many apoſtolic exhortations, perſuaſions, and directions, given to them as believers. And it is thro' faith, under the influence of God's mighty power, that the ſpiritual life is nouriſhed in them, to their growing in grace, and a greater meetneſs for that life that is eternal in heaven. But tis, at the ſame time, far from being true, that there are no commands and exhortations given in ſcripture to perſons, while deſtitute of juſtifying faith. When our Savior preached, ſaying, "repent ye, and believe the goſpel", * his hearers, for the generality, were of this ſort. When

* Mark 1. 15.

When he ſaid, * " this is the work of God", the work God requires of you, " that ye believe in him whom he hath ſent", he ſpake, to thoſe, who followed him " for the loaves", and not " the miracles" which he had wro't. And when the apoſtle Paul publiſhed it as the will of God, now the goſpel-diſpenſation had taken place, " that all men every where ſhould repent", † he principally had in view the ſinners we are ſpeaking of. And ſinners, while viewed as deſtitute of ſaving faith, are, in innumerable places, in the ſacred books, the immediate ſubjects of the divine exhortations and commands; ‡ yea, and theſe are urged with every argument, that is ſuited to work upon reaſonable creatures. Every power of the human mind is apply'd to, and every motive uſed, that can be fetched, either from earth, heaven, or hell.

Nor is it true, that the apoſtles took no other care of thoſe, who were believers, than to lay before them the ſimple ſaving truth of the goſpel. They not only did this, but endeavoured to do that alſo, which might have a natural aptitude, a rational tendency, under the divine bleſſing, to beget faith in them. §

It may with propriety be added here, In the firſt days of the goſpel (as has been the caſe ever ſince) there were two ſorts of believers; ſuch as were poſſeſſed of faith, which, tho' real, was ſhort of that which is juſtifying; and ſuch as were en-

 dowed

* John 6. 29. † Acts 17. 30.

‡ See the texts particularly mentioned, pag. 242.

§ See what is ſaid upon this head, in pag. 224, 225, 226.

dowed with the faith that is unto life. This is repreſented by our Savior under a variety of ſimilitudes: by the ten virgins, five whereof were wiſe, and five fooliſh; and by the parables of the talents, of the pounds, of the wheat and tares, and of the ſower that ſowed ſeed in four ſeveral ſorts of ground. And all the churches gathered by the apoſtles conſiſted of theſe two ſorts of believers. Some had faith in the ſaving ſenſe, others had only ſuch a faith as might be the effect of the common illuminations and aſſiſtances of the Spirit. This now being a known truth, many of the commands, exhortations, perſuaſions and encouragements, which were directed, by our Savior, to believers in general; and, by the apoſtles, to the churches as collective bodies, may reaſonably be looked upon as deſigned for the uſe and benefit of thoſe, who had not ſaving faith, as well as thoſe who had it. When they are exhorted and perſuaded, not "to draw back"; to "hold faſt the profeſſion of their faith", to "labor that they may enter into reſt"; to be "circumſpect, watch and pray"; not to "harden their hearts"; not to "depart from the living God"; not to "grieve the holy Spirit"; not to "neglect the aſſembling themſelves together"; to "draw nigh toGod"; to examine themſelves,& to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup", and the like: Theſe exhortations are equally proper to both theſe ſorts of believers; and they might both of them, from the faith they were reſpectively the ſubjects of, exert themſelves in expreſſing a regard to them. And, in truth, no good reaſon can be given, why the means of grace, the advantages of the viſible kingdom of God, ſhould not

not be intended for the ſpiritual advantage of believers in common; that is, of believers who are not as yet in a ſtate of juſtification, as well as thoſe who are. Tis certainly fact, that all who made a profeſſion of faith, in the days of the apoſtles, whether their faith was of the "common", or "ſpecial" kind, were admitted to a participation in all viſible goſpel privileges; and theſe privileges are, in their nature, happily calculated to promote the ſpiritual good of all that have faith, whether of the "common", or "ſaving" ſort. Tis poſſible in the moral, tho' not in the natural world, that "tares", by proper means and due culture, may, under the divine influence, be converted into good "wheat". And this was, doubtleſs, the caſe oftentimes in the days of the apoſtles; as it may have been in all ages ſince. Nor unleſs we ſuppoſe, that goſpel-means may be uſed by believers, who have not as yet attained to the faith that juſtifies, ſhall we find it an eaſie matter to account for the conduct of the apoſtles, in "immediately" admiting perſons to "baptiſm", and "fellowſhip in breaking of bread", upon their profeſſion of faith in Chriſt: * Whereas, the difficulty, upon this head,

* Tis indubitably true, that the firſt preachers of the religion of Jeſus readily admitted all, who profeſſed faith in him, to an attendance on goſpel-inſtitutions, upon their bare profeſſion, without waiting for proof that their faith was that by which "the juſt do live". This appears from the caſe of the Ethiopian eunuch, whoſe conviction that Jeſus was the Chriſt, confeſſion of him as ſuch, and baptiſm in his name, were all compleated within the ſpace of a few hours only, Acts 8. from the 27th ver. The ſame thing is equally evident from what is ſaid of the Jailor, and thoſe that were

will be at once removed, if it is a truth, as I imagine it is, that the inſtitutions of the chriſtian religion

were in his houſe. The apoſtles, Paul and Silas, had ſcarce done "ſpeaking the word of the Lord" to them, before they "baptiſed" them all. They did it "ſtraitway, the ſame hour of the night", Acts 16. 33. In like manner, the "three thouſand", ſpoken of in the 2d chap. of this ſame book, were, within the ſpace of a ſingle day, convinced that "Jeſus who had been crucified was Lord and Chriſt, baptiſed, added to the church", and admited to "fellowſhip with the apoſtles in breaking of bread, and in prayers". Nor do we read of any, who confeſſed Chriſt, whoſe baptiſm, or reception into chriſtian communion, were delayed by the apoſtles; but their manner was "immediately" to admit them as diſciples barely upon this profeſſion. Surely, they would not have been thus haſty in admiting perſons to a participation in goſpel-ordinances, had they imagined, that chriſtian profeſſors might not "draw near to God", till the truth had been SAVINGLY received into their hearts. Had they tho't, with our author, that "all the exhortations, commands, and inſtitutions of the goſpel, were directed to conſciences endued with this new inſtinct", it can't be ſuppoſed, without reflecting diſhonor on their character, that they would at once, without the leaſt delay, have admited all kinds of perſons to fellowſhip with them in the kingdom of Chriſt. It might rather have been expected, that they would have taken time to inſtruct, adviſe and guard their hearers; and have waited for credible evidence, in the judgment of charity, that they were believers in the SAVING ſenſe, before they put them upon attending on the inſtitutions of chriſtianity. Had they eſteemed it a truth, that theſe inſtitutions were appointed for the obſervance of none but thoſe, who were in a "juſtified ſtate by faith", tis incredible they ſhould have been active in encouraging ſuch numbers to obſerve them, upon a verbal profeſſion only, before there had been opportunity for the tryal

of

religion were appointed for the uſe and benefit of all that have faith, whether of the "common",

of their faith, or the exhibition of proper proof that it was of the SAVING ſort. And what makes this the more incredible is, that they had been ſufficiently taught by our Savior, before he left the world, that meerly a profeſſion of faith was no good proof, in the caſe of any, that they were SAVINGLY the ſubjects of it. Multitudes, in his day, ſo believed on him, as, in tranſport of joy, to profeſs themſelves his diſciples; and yet, after a while, they "went back", and ſo totally as to "walk no more with him", Joh. 6. 66. Great numbers flocked to the baptiſm of John; but it became matter of obſervation, yea, and of offence to the phariſees, that "Jeſus made more diſciples" than his forerunner, permiting them alſo to be "baptiſed", Joh. 4. 1. And yet, the writer of the book of the Acts, ſpeaking of our Lord's diſciples, juſt after his reſurrection, ſays, "the number of names together was about an hundred and twenty", Acts 1. 15. What an amazing falling away of Chriſt's diſciples muſt there have been, by this account! The apoſtles could not but know it. They knew alſo, that our Lord had ſaid to thoſe, who had profeſſed faith in him, Joh. 8. 31. "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my diſciples indeed": And in words ſtill more explicit, Matth. 7. 21. "not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven". It ought not therefore to be ſuppoſed, when the apoſtles ſo ſuddenly admited perſons to baptiſm, & communion in goſpel-ordinances, upon a meer verbal profeſſion of faith, that they imagined this profeſſion gave credible proof that they were believers in the SAVING ſenſe, or that they looked upon them as ſuch. Tis far more reaſonable to think, that they underſtood, by the faith men profeſſed, no more than ſuch a conviction that "Jeſus was the Chriſt", as to be there-from diſpoſed and influenced to a readineſs to own him as their Savior and maſter; to

or "ſpecial" kind; that it is accordingly the duty of all ſuch to wait upon God, in the diligent uſe of theſe means; and that, by thus uſing them, they are in "the way" of a bleſſing.

OBJ. III.

put themſelves, as diſciples, under his care, guidance and tuition; and to be found in the uſe of his appointments, as the beſt method they could take to be further enlightened, inſtructed, improved, and "trained up in the way they ſhould go", in order to their finding eternal life. If goſpel-inſtitutions are conſidered as a means wiſely fited to cultivate and make the beſt of ſuch a faith as this, and as deſigned by God to be uſed, by thoſe who have it, to this end; the conduct of the apoſtles will need nothing to be ſaid in its vindication. It was juſt ſuch as it was fit and reaſonable it ſhould be. Tis beyond doubt with me, that this was their ſentiment concerning theſe inſtitutions; and that this alſo was their view in admiting theſe profeſſors to an attendance on them. Surely, they did not take them into their chriſtian fellowſhip, upon the preſumption that they were the ſubjects of a faith that was SAVING; for they had no credible evidence to ground ſuch a preſumption on, in the judgment of the largeſt charity. They had reaſon rather for fear, leaſt the faith of, by far the greater part of them was no other, than that common one, which might conſiſt with their periſhing beyond the grave. But ſtill, if goſpel-inſtitutions were a ſuitably adapted means to BEGET, as well as increaſe, SAVING faith, they acted a wiſe and faithful part in "immediately" admiting theſe profeſſors to the uſe of them; as hereby they put them into the "moſt likely way" of becoming chriſtians formed to a "meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſanctified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt". Unleſs the apoſtles acted upon this ſuppoſition, I confeſs my own inability to juſtify the wiſdom of their conduct, or indeed its faithfulneſs either to God, or men. Nor can I juſtifie their's, upon any other ſuppoſition, who encourage perſons in the uſe of goſpel-inſtitutions, till they are clearly

OBJ. III. SOME, it may be, will again object and ſay, the beſt doings of the moſt refined ſinner, while deſtitute of that faith, without which there cannot be ſpiritual life, are of no value, of not the leaſt conſideration. They may rather be eſteemed ſplendida peccata, * *ſhining ſins*, than performances

clearly ſatisfied, upon proper tryal of their faith by its fruits, that tis of the SAVING kind: Nay, I ſee not, if the means, privileges, and advantages of the viſible kingdom of Chriſt, were intended for the uſe of thoſe only, who are the ſubjects of SAVING faith, that any other perſons, be they who they will, or their common attainments as high as you will, have any buiſineſs to meddle with them. Upon which, it will perhaps follow, in a courſe of juſt reaſoning, that none have any thing to do with the appointments of the chriſtian religion, that is, they have nothing at all to do, till the truth is "ſavingly" admited into their hearts. Our author, to do him juſtice, is herein conſiſtent with himſelf. I wiſh I could ſay the ſame of all he has to do with.

* The beſt doings of thoſe, who are deſtitute of the faith that is ſaving, are called *ſhining ſins*, not meerly on account of their being defective as to the "manner" of their performance, or the "end" propoſed thereby; but as being ſinful in their "whole form", as having "no good" in them, nothing but what is offenſive to God, and diſpleaſing in his ſight. I don't remember, that our author has particularly made this repreſentation of them. But others, and of conſiderable reputation in the learned world, have expreſly conſidered them in this point of view; but without ſufficient warrant, as I imagine, either from reaſon, or ſcripture. The late reverend Mr. Experience Mayhew, who was exceeded by few, if any, among us, in the ſtrength of his reaſoning powers, and might truly be called a great Divine, notwithſtanding his diſadvantageous circumſtances for learned improvements; having ſpent

performances that have any good in them. And will God pay any regard to ſuch worthleſs ſervices? Will he take occaſion from them to make ſinners the partakers of the grace that is in Jeſus Chriſt?

I ANS.

a long life in miniſterial ſervices, upon an unreaſonably ſcanty maintainance, to the Indian-natives, in ſeveral of their obſcure villages: This gentleman, tho' a known, profeſſed Calviniſt, even upon the ſupra-lapſarian ſcheme, in his book entitled, "Grace defended", has ſo clearly and judiciouſly handled this point, as to leave no reaſonable room for further diſpute about it. See from page 148 to 153. I ſhall only ſelect a few of his thot's, in the following words. "Many of the materially good actions, which unregenerate perſons perform, are the effects of the "grace of God in and upon them; and therefore not "ſins. I cannot think, that actions which men perform "by the help, and influence, of the word, and Spirit "of God, are well called ſins. God may be truly "ſaid to be the author of ſuch actions. It is he, of "his grace, who ſtirs up, and excites, poor ſinful "creatures to perform the actions I ſpeak of. He "enables them to hear, read, meditate, and pray; "and he is the author of ſuch faith as they have, who "believe only for a while, as in Luk. 8. 13. Or may "it not be granted, that ſuch faith, repentance, &c. "as the beſt, of which unregenerate perſons are ſometimes the ſubjects, are effects of the grace of God, "wro't by God's word and Spirit in their ſouls, and "frequently called *common grace?* And are they, this "notwithſtanding, all ſin, abomination in God's ſight; "and, as ſome ſay, contrary to ſaving grace? I con-"ſtantly maintain, that there is a *ſpeciſical* difference "between common grace, and that which is ſpecial; "but I ſee no reaſon to oppoſe them one to the other, "as *contraries* are oppoſed. Whether, by common "grace, we underſtand thoſe gracious influences of "God's Spirit, with which the unregenerate are ſome-

"times

I ANSWER. The queſtion is not, of what real value are theſe doings of ſinners ? For tis not in the virtue of what they are, in themſelves ſimply conſidered, that they are ever followed with the beſtowment of ſpiritual favor. And the ſame may be ſaid, with equal truth, of the doings even of the moſt ſanctified believers. In their own value, they are inſignificant to the purpoſes of ſalvation. The worthineſs of that glorious perſon, who " once offered up himſelf a ſacrifice to God for ſin", is the alone foundation of all ſpiritual

" times favored, or the good effects produced in them " by theſe gracious operations, I am not, for my part, " willing to allow them to be ſin". Pag. 151. He ſays, in the next page, " If the beſt actions of the unregenerate " be truly and properly ſins, I ſee no reaſon, for the " preſent, but that it were better they were let alone " than done. If it be ſaid, tho' the doing of them be " ſin, yet it is a greater greater ſin to omit them ; I " anſwer, that if they are properly ſins, I know not " of any rule men have, of two ſins to chuſe the leaſt. " I believe that neither the one, nor the other, ought " to be choſen ; but that both ought to be abhorred. " Indeed, of two things where one is leſs good than " the other, if both cannot be done, the beſt ought " to be made choice of ; but where both the things " in queſtion are properly ſins, this is not the caſe". He adds, " I believe, that if the beſt actions (if I may " may ſo ſpeak) of the unregenerate were really ſins, " all the regenerate would be obliged to repent of all " they did before their regeneration, and in order to " it ; as their reading, hearing, meditating, praying " for converting grace, giving alms, &c.. I confeſs, " they ought to repent that they performed theſe " things in no better a manner than they did ; but " not that they did them at all : Tho' they did them " not in ſuch a manner as the regenerate only can " perform actions in reſpect of the matter, or general " nature of them".

tual beſtowments, whether to ſaints, or ſinners. And if, upon this foundation, God has directed to human endeavours as " the way" in which he chuſes to beſtow his ſaving mercy, who ſhall diſpute his pleaſure? The only proper queſtion therefore here is, has God pointed out theſe endeavours as " the way" in which he " ordinarily" diſpenſes his grace? If this is the truth, and appears to be ſo from the ſacred ſcriptures, as well as experience, tis to no purpoſe to diſpute about their true moral intrinſick worth. For whether they are of great, or little, or no value at all, in themſelves ſimply conſidered; yet, if God requires them, and, in the uſe of them, effects the work of grace in the hearts of ſinners, they become valuable in this relative view, yea, to an high degree important and neceſſary.

Tis true, when the performances of ſinners in religion are nothing more than form and ceremony; when their main view in what they do, is to be " ſeen of men, and to have glory from them"; when they " make long prayers" for a diſguiſe " to devour widow's houſes, and appear to be righteous that they may, with greater advantage, carry on ſome wicked deſign: What they thus do, however ſpecious it may ſeem to men, is abomination to the Lord: Nor can ſuch doings be well ſpoken of with too great ſeverity. But the ſame ought not to be ſaid of the religious endeavours of awaken'd ſinners, who tremble for fear of God, and the wrath to come; who are earneſt in their enquiries what they ſhall do to be ſaved, and do with their might whatever they apprehend to be their duty, and this with ſerioul-

neſs,

neſs, ſolemnity and concern of ſoul; yea, with views and aims that are "good", as being "directed to by God himſelf", tho' they are not the higheſt and nobleſt. Is there no difference between this kind of ſinners, as to the ſtate of their mind, and their manner of doing duty, and thoſe who are in no trouble about their ſins, or the conſequences of them, and never engage in religious ſervices unleſs for faſhion's ſake, or to ſerve their own worldly ends? The difference between them is great and ſtriking. And that God, whoſe eyes run too and fro thro' the whole earth, ſees the difference, and will accordingly make a different eſtimate of them. He won't indeed eſteem theſe awaken'd perſons to be gracious ones, as this may not be the truth of their character; but he may take occaſion from the ſtate of mind they are in, and the conſequent operation of it (in the production of which his own Spirit has had a great influence) to diſplay his mercy in Jeſus Chriſt towards them. And this, in fact, is "the way" (as we have ſeen) in which he "ordinarily" does it. And for any, therefore, to ſpeak of the endeavours of theſe awaken'd ſinners, exerted in the manner we have deſcribed, ſo as to lead people into an imagination, as tho' they were uſeleſs; nay hurtful, rather than tending to any ſalutary purpoſe, is a bare-faced affront to the wiſdom of God, in the "method he uſually takes", conformably to his own appointment, in diſpenſing the influences of his grace; and it may, beſides, eventually prove to many, by leading them into a contemptuous tho't of theſe endeavours, and a conſequent neglect of them, the occaſion of the damnation of their

ſouls

ſouls * A ſerious tho't this, and well worthy of our ſerious conſideration.

OBJ. IV.

* Our author, in order to counter-act "the large work that is cut out," by the popular preachers," for the pride of the devotees in this doctrine about convictions of guilt", introduces the following illuſtration, pag. 290. "If two men are led to execution for the ſame crime, "the one over-whelm'd in ſorrow, and the other ele- "vated to noiſie mirth by ſtrong drink, we juſtly "reckon the condition of the latter to be fully as "miſerable as the former; and if mercy reſpects meer "miſery, wretchedneſs, and unworthineſs, it will "certainly as readily regard the miſerable perſon, as "him who has the quickeſt feeling of what is before "him: Otherwiſe it behoved to regard the one, as "more worthy than his fellow; which would be in- "conſiſtent with the nature of mercy, at leaſt that of "divine mercy; for wherever the leaſt degree of "worth appears, there the province of mercy ceaſes, "and that of juſtice and equity takes place". The caſe, as here put, is far from being placed in a fair or juſt point of light. Who ever ſaid, or tho't, that a ſinner, by being bro't under "a work of conviction", became a "worthy" object of the divine notice? Or that he now had that about him which made it a matter of "juſtice", or "equity", in God to ſhew regard to him? Sinners in common, whether ſenſible or inſenſible, were viewed by God, when he laid the plan of redeeming grace, in all their unworthineſs; and notwithſtanding their unworthineſs, whether more or leſs, he was pleaſed, in his ſuper-abounding grace, equally to comprehend them all in the goſpel-proclamation of mercy. But then, which ſhould be heedfully minded, not any of them ſhall obtain this mercy, till they are wro't upon to become believers in Jeſus Chriſt. A "conviction of guilt" is therefore urged, not as tho' it would make ſinners the "worthy" objects of the divine favor; but as it prepares their minds for that faith, without which they cannot be admitted to mercy. It's office wholly relates to the introduction

OBJ. IV. SOME, perhaps, will go on, and ſay ſtill further, to put ſinners upon exerting themſelves, in the uſe of means, to obtain the faith that is unto life, is, in reality of conſtruction, to put on of faith, and muſt therefore be determined to be uſeful, or uſeleſs, as it either has, or has not, a tendency towards the obtainment of it. And is an awakened ſenſibility of mind of no uſe, of not the leaſt ſervice, in order to faith? Is the ſtupidly tho'tleſs and ſecure ſinner under as great advantage to become a believer to life, as he that preſſingly feels his need of relief, and is therefrom excited to an earneſt care in inquiring, where, and how, he may find it? Is the hardened profligate, who ſcoffs at God, and every thing ſerious and ſacred, in as fair a way to come to the ſaving knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, as he that ſo ſees and feels his need of this knowledge as to "cry after it", and "ſeek for it as for hid treaſure, watching daily at wiſdom's gates, and waiting at the poſts of her door"? One would think, there could be no room for debate in ſo plain a point as this. The ſcripture certainly ſpeaks of ſinners, as being in a "better", or "worſe" ſtate of mind for the reception of faith; yea, it very evidently inſinuates, that they may ſo harden themſelves in perverſe obſtinacy, as to be beyond any probable proſpect of becoming the ſubjects of it. See pag. 235, to 242. I ſhall illuſtrate what has been above offered, in the following manner. A malefactor that goes to the gallows deeply ſenſible of his folly, and awaken'd therefrom to humble ardent ſupplications for mercy, may not, upon this account, "deſerve" a pardon, or demand it as his right in point of "juſtice" or "equity", any more than his companion that goes with him to the ſame puniſhment, for the ſame crime, in an unconcerned, light and merry frame of mind. But, had the earthly ſovereign, in whoſe power it was to grant a pardon, contrived and publiſhed a method, thro' the mediation of his own ſon, conformably to which he *might*, with honor and juſtice

put them upon working out a righteouſneſs of their own, which is not only diſhonorary to Chriſt, but one of the moſt deſtructive miſtakes they can be led into.

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juſtice to his government, ſhew mercy to *any criminal*, in this ſtate of condemnation ; and *certainly would to all*, who ſo believed in his mercy as, in the exerciſe of true penitence, to apply to him for it ?—In this caſe, the deeply concerned, and ardently ſupplicating malefactor would act a wiſe and proper part ; while the tho'tleſs, vain and jovial one would deſerve, could it be done, to be executed a ſecond time for the baſeneſs of his ingratitude, in reflecting ſuch contempt upon that mercy of his ſovereign, which would have ſaved him, had it not been for his own ſtupid folly. Tis obſervable, the ſtoryof the two malefactors, who were crucified with our Savior, exhibits a caſe not unlike this I have put. It very ſtrikingly points out the difference our Lord made between "a careleſs and convicted ſinner". Were both theſe criminals in the like hardened and inſenſible ſtate of mind ? Tis as certain they were not, as words can make it. Of one of them tis ſaid, that he "rebuked the other" for his prophane mockery of our Lord ; that he expreſſed a becoming ſenſe of the heinous crime for which he was now ſuffering ; and that he acknowledged the juſtice of his condemnation, profeſſing that he therein received no more than "the due reward of his deeds" : Beſides all which, he was ſo tho'tful of futurity, ſo deeply concerned about what might follow upon the death of his body, and had ſo much faith in Chriſt, as an almighty Savior, from what he had heard of him, as importunately to pray to him in thoſe moving words, "Lord, remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom". Upon which, "Jeſus ſaid to him, verily I ſay unto thee, to day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe", Luk. 23. from the 39th to 44th ver. Had this malefactor, while hanging on the croſs, been equally ſtupid with his companion as to any ſenſe

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THE reply is obvious ; If any ſhould be ſo unadviſed, as to put ſinners upon exerting themſelves, in any way whatever, in order to atone for their guilt, or do that which was effected 1700 years ago, by the work of Chriſt finiſhed on the croſs, they would, without all doubt, put them upon "eſtabliſhing a righteouſneſs of their own", in oppoſition to "the righteouſneſs of God by faith". But this can, with no face of truth, or juſtice, be charged upon thoſe endeavours, we have been recommending. Far from placing them in the room of Chriſt, we ground all the hope of ſinners upon the perfection of his obedience, compleated by his humiliation to death. We freely allow, that their beſt doings are of no value, "as a righteouſneſs" that will ſupply the place of grace and Chriſt. They ſuppoſe an atonement already made without them ; and that, in conſequence of it, God may ſhew mercy to ſinners, notwithſtanding the greateſt unworthineſs. And they are put upon religious endeavours, not becauſe they are adapted, in their own virtue, to procure for them the divine favor ; but becauſe

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of ſin, or danger after death ; and had he equally ſignified it by his ſpeech or behavior, reviling our Lord, inſtead of making application to him for ſpiritual and eternal mercy, will any one ſay, he would have ſhewed it to him ? 'Tis evident, from the whole run of the ſtory, that he was in a ſerious, diſtreſſed, awakened ſtate of mind. In "this frame of mind" he applied for mercy, and in "this way" he obtained it ; while his unconcerned, inſenſible and unſeeking companion was left to periſh in his ſins. And this, I believe, is commonly the caſe. Inſenſible, ſecure ſinners ſeldom receive the "ſaving truth", till they are previouſly awakened to ſuch a ſenſe of their need of it, as importunately to ſeek to God for it.

it is in concurrence with ſuch endeavours, that God "ordinarily" operates to form that character, without which none can, in conſiſtency with the goſpel, receive ſaving advantage from the obedience and blood of Chriſt.

MEN may, it is true, thro' ignorance and pride, expect that from their own endeavours, which they ought to expect, and can reaſonably expect, only from the doings and ſufferings of Chriſt. And this may be a fault too common, in a leſs or greater degree, among ſaints as well as ſinners, that is, thoſe who have ſaving faith, as well as thoſe who have it not. All indeed are chargeable with it, who expect acceptance with God, in the virtue of any righteouſneſs of their's, inſtead of the perfect work of Jeſus Chriſt. Such righteouſneſs may properly be called "their own", as it is of "their own deviſing", and not of God's appointing; and it will reflect diſhonor on Chriſt, as conſtructively rendering his death a vain thing. But ſhall men ſet ſtill, and do nothing, becauſe they may ignorantly, or proudly, expect too much from what they do? They ought rather to be put upon their guard, and taught, how they may exert themſelves, and, at the ſame time, give due honor to Chriſt, by placing a juſt dependance on what he has done. The ſhort of the matter is, if God has required the endeavours of ſinners, and "ordinarily" beſtows his grace in the uſe of them, we may be ſure they may be ſo uſed, as not to be inconſiſtent with the doings of Chriſt. And to ſay, that they cannot, is, in reality of conſtruction, to make

make ourſelves wiſer than God; for he would never have required theſe endeavours, nor would he have bleſſed them with the concurring influences of his Spirit, if they had thrown contempt on Chriſt, and were incapable of being uſed, but to the ſubverſion of his work finiſhed on the croſs.

WHAT remains then, as the concluſion of all, but that thoſe, who are deſtitute of the faith that is juſtifying, exert themſelves in the uſe of all proper means, that they may become the ſubjects of this grace. If you won't aſk God to give it you; if you won't ſeek for it as for hid treaſure; if you won't labor and ſtrive to obtain it;—but chuſe rather careleſly to ſet down, and do nothing, what may you expect but that God, in righteous judgment, ſhould take from you his holy Spirit, and ſuffer you to live and die in a ſtate of unbelief? And ſhould this be the caſe, who could you blame but yourſelves? Your mouths would be ſtopt; you would not be able to ſay a word, unleſs to juſtifie God, and condemn yourſelves.

You will certainly be chargeable with folly, the madneſs of folly, if you are thot'leſs and unconcerned, in this affair of infinite and everlaſting importance. It challenges your firſt care, your higheſt ſollicitude, the moſt vigorous exertment of all your powers. And you have this to encourage your endeavours, that it is in "this way ordinarily" that God makes ſinners the

ſubjects of his ſaving mercy in Jeſus Chriſt. Take all due care to put and keep yourſelves in this way of God. And you may humbly hope to reap the advantage of ſo doing, by his ſending his Spirit to work that work of faith in you, which will intereſt you in the redeemer's obedience and blood, and, in conſequence of this, the everlaſting ſalvation of your ſouls. God grant it may be the portion of us all, thro' Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

The Method of the Spirit, in the Work of Illumination.

EPHESIANS I. 18.

"The Eyes of your Underſtanding being enlightened"——

I HAVE choſen this text, to take occaſion from it, to diſcourſe to you upon that "illumination of the Spirit", without which we cannot be the ſubjects of the "faith by which the juſt do live".

And it may, perhaps, be of ſervice, in order to our conceiving juſtly of its nature, to attend a while to the manner in which the apoſtle Paul expreſſes himſelf, with reference to it, in the text; "the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened". The like figurative mode of ſpeech is

frequently uſed elſewhere in ſcripture. Says the inſpired David, * "the commandment of the Lord is pure,—enlightening the eyes". Says the evangelical prophet, deſcribing the office of Chriſt, † "He is given a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes". By "the blind eyes", he means preciſely the ſame thing with what is called, in the new-teſtament, "the blind mind"; and the perſons he would point out are thoſe, whoſe character is that, ‡ "alienated from the life of God, thro' the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts". The apoſtle Paul, in like language, ſpeaks of himſelf as "ſent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes" the eyes of their underſtanding, "and to turn them from darkneſs to light". §

Tis obſervable, in all theſe paſſages, that "faculty of the ſoul", by which we diſcern truth, is likened to the "bodily eye", by the help of which we diſcern the objects of ſight. And there is, in ſome ſtriking reſpects, an analogy between the bodily, and mental, faculty of ſeeing. And tis in virtue of this analogy, that ſeeing is ſo commonly apply'd to the mind; and that we ſo frequently read, and hear, of "the eyes of the underſtanding", as well as of the body.

I SHALL endeavour, not only to point out to you this analogy, but ſo to do it as, at the ſame time, to illuſtrate the doctrine of "divine illumination"; the thing I principally have in view.

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* Pſal. 19. 8. † Iſa. 42. 6, 7. ‡ Eph. 4. 19.
§ Acts 26. 18.

1. In the firſt place, In order to men's being capable of ſeeing, they muſt be endow'd with thoſe bodily organs, which are naturally fited to the purpoſe. If they are deſtitute of theſe; were born without them, or have ſince been deprived of them, it is impoſſible they ſhould ſee. Their condition is ſuch, that none of the objects of ſight can be perceived by them. Darkneſs and light are to them the ſame thing: They have no faculty by which they can diſcern the difference between them. And if they were always without this faculty, they have no idea at all of light, or colours: Nor can it be communicated to them, conformably to the eſtabliſht order of nature. They are incapable of ſuch communication, unleſs by a miraculous exertment of the power of the God of nature.

And thus it is with reſpect to "mental ſight". The underſtanding is the ſame thing in relation to truth, that the bodily eye is with regard to the objects of ſight. If therefore men are not endow'd with an intellectual faculty, they can have no perception of truth of any ſort or kind. Their minds will be in as total darkneſs, as their bodies are when they have no eyes. Nor can the idea of truth, while they are deſtitute of the underſtanding-faculty, be conveyed to them, any more than the idea of light to thoſe that never had the organs of ſight.

In conſequence of this analogy between bodily and mental ſight, it may naturally be enquired, whether, in the work of "illumination", God creates the faculty by which men are made to

ſee, or effects a moral change only in the intellectual faculty they are already poſſeſſed of?

I SHOULD not have tho't, that there was any room for ſuch an inquiry, had it not been for what ſome have ſaid, it may be unwarily upon this ſubject. It ſhould ſeem paſt all reaſonable diſpute, that, in enlightening men's minds, God conſiders them, and deals with them, as intelligent beings. Tis the truth of fact, that they are ſo. They come into exiſtence endow'd with an underſtanding-faculty. Some indeed are born ideots, as there are others that are born blind. But for the generality, they are naturally endow'd with an intellectual capacity. Tis true, the entrance of ſin into the world has greatly hurt this power of the mind; inſomuch that, if left to ourſelves, and our own guidance, we ſhall "darken our hearts" thro' prejudice and luſt. But notwithſtanding the original lapſe, and all that has been conſequent upon it, the intellectual faculty itſelf remains in us. We ſtill exiſt intelligent creatures. There is therefore, in the "work of illumination", no infuſion of any new faculty by the creating power of God. "The almighty inſpir'd us with underſtanding", the natural capacity for it, when he gave us a being in the world. Whatever therefore is done, in the affair of illumination, is done upon a faculty we are previouſly the ſubjects of: Nor is there any change effected, when ſinners are enlightened by the Spirit of God, but what is of the moral kind. Their underſtandings may be aſſiſted, ſtrengthened, enlarged, refined, and greatly alter'd for the better; but no new faculty is introduced into their nature.

nature. The ſcripture no where ſuggeſts ſuch a thing; but always ſuppoſes, on the contrary, that men have underſtandings to enlighten; otherwiſe they could not be enlightened. There would be no foundation, in their make, for this work to be built upon.

It will, perhaps, be ſaid, thoſe that are enlightened "diſcern ſpiritually" the things of the Spirit, which the "natural man" is not capable of doing: Nor can it be done, by any, without the introduction of ſome new faculty. If by a new faculty is meant, a faculty ſo changed from what it was, that it may properly be called new in the moral ſenſe, it is readily allowed. But this is a quite different thing from the formation of a capacity, power, or faculty, in the ſoul, that is phyſically new. Their is no need of any new faculty, in this ſenſe. The natural one, made morally new, will anſwer the end as well. Nothing more indeed is neceſſary, in order to a "ſpiritual diſcerning of the things of the ſpirit", than an ability to ſee them in a light that is new, and different from that in which they are ſeen by the underſtanding, conſidered in its meer "natural" ſtate. And what is there in this, but the mind may be capable of, when it comes to be enlightened by the Spirit of God? Tis eaſily ſuppoſeable, that he may ſo help men's underſtandings, as that they ſhall be able to ſee the things of God in their true point of light, and ſo as they never did, or could ſee them before.

2. We cannot ſee, in the literal ſenſe without light. This is the medium by which viſible objects

jects are made perceptible. Was the visive faculty ever so sound and perfect, it would be intirely useless if there was no light. It is by the intervention of the rayes of the sun, or some other luminous body, that impressions are made on the organs of sight, and those sensations caused, which none are the capable subjects of, but those who have eyes to see.

And something analagous to this is true, in regard of the understanding-faculty. Ideas are the same thing to the intellectual eye, that the rayes of light are to the bodily eye. Were we void of ideas, we should be in total, mental darkness, and incapable of seeing with the eye of the understanding, tho' it were ever so bright and clear. There might, in this case, be the faculty of intellectual sight, but we should not be able to use it. It would be of no manner of service: We might as well be without it.

The "God of nature" has therefore, not only implanted in us an intellectual faculty, but taken care to provide for the introduction of ideas into our minds, that it might be useful to us. Impressions from the material world, by the intervention of a variety of bodily organs, suitably adapted to the purpose, affect the soul, and, in time, conformably to a settled course of nature, store it with ideas; which ideas, together with the perceptions we have of the operations of our mental powers, serve as a light to our understanding-faculty: And it is by this light, that we become capable of seeing with it, that is, of perceiving those innumerable "natural truths" that are the objects of this faculty. But,

BUT, beſides this natural light, to come nearer to our point, the God of grace, that men's minds might be ſuitably enlightened, has ſuperadded the light of revelation; which light he intended, ſhould be of like uſe to the eyes of their underſtandings, with reſpect to the great things pertaining to ſalvation, that the natural light is to the bodily eye, in regard of the common affairs of life. We are frequently led, by the ſacred writers, to conceive thus of the matter. Says, the man after God's own heart, * "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes". And again † "thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path". To the like purpoſe are thoſe words of Solomon, ‡ "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light". And Chriſt, whoſe character is that, "the ſun of righteouſneſs", is repreſented to be of the ſame uſe to the intellectual ſight of men, that the ſun in the heavens is to the bodily ſight. Hence he is ſaid to have "come a light into the world". § Hence he is called "a light to lighten the Gentiles" ‖ And hence the deſign of his coming is ſpoken of in ſuch language that, "to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death". * And the light he has given the world, in the revelations of ſcripture, is that alone, by which we are let into the knowlege of the goſpel method of "redemption thro' Jeſus Chriſt". It lay "hid in God", till he was pleaſed "ſupernaturally" to open the everlaſting deſigns of his grace to a periſhing world. This he did to Adam, and Abraham, in a general ſummary way;

* Pſal. 19. 8. † Pſal. 119. 105. ‡ Prov. 6. 23.
§ John 8. 12. ‖ Luk. 2. 32. * Luk. 1. 79.

way; and to the jewiſh nation, under the cover of types, figures and prophetic repreſentations; but never in a diſtinct and explicit manner, till the times of Chriſt, who came from the father, knew his mind, reſpecting the great affair of man's ſalvation, and plainly declared it to the world.

Tis obſervable, the natural light, without which a being on the earth would be ſcarce deſireable, is the ſole contrivance, and effect, of the infinite wiſdom, power and goodneſs of God. He CREATED it. And he is, in like manner, the CREATOR of that light, which ſhews men the way of ſalvation thro' a redeemer. It came down ſuper-naturally from above: Nor could we have had any idea of the truths it diſcovers, had they not, in this way, been revealed to us. This revealed light is therefore the ſame thing, in the "new-creation", that the natural light is in the "old". And we are abſolutely beholden to God for it. There is nothing of man in it, no will of his, not ſo much as a wiſh, or tho't of his heart. Tis intirely the gift of heaven. And tis in this ſenſe, with great propriety, that God is ſaid to "enlighten our underſtandings"; for they have no light, nor was it poſſible they ſhould have any, with reference to the goſpel-plan of ſalvation, but what God has been pleaſed freely to give them; and this, in a way preventive of any endeavours of their's to procure this gift.

I SHALL not think it a digreſſion to ſubjoin here, the bodily eye, and viſible objects, are ſo fited to each other, by the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, as that pleaſure is connected with the application

plication of the latter to the former. Not but that the impreſſions made on the organs of ſight, by external objects, are ſometimes the occaſion of uneaſineſs. It was deſigned they ſhould be ſo. And many wiſe and valuable ends are anſwered hereby. But ſtill, pleaſure is ordinarily conjoined with ſeeing, according to that obſervation of the wiſe man, * "the light is ſweet, and a pleaſant thing it is for the eye to behold the ſun". And this is as true of the eye of the underſtanding, as of the body. The perception of truth is accompanied with pleaſure, unleſs in thoſe inſtances wherein it is intended to excite averſion, and give anxiety. There is ſuch a proportion, congruity, agreement, or whatever elſe any may pleaſe to call it, between the intellectual faculty, and the objects that are fited to give it delight, that this, by an eſtabliſht uniform courſe of nature, is the reſult of their meeting together. It not only perceives theſe objects, but perceives alſo, at the ſame time, a ſweetneſs, beauty and excellency in them, greater or leſs, according to the nature of the object perceived, and the degree in which it is perceived. There are no intellectual objects, in themſelves beautiful and excellent, but the underſtanding is formed with a capacity, originally greater in ſome, and leſs in others, to perceive the beauty and excellency there is in them, as truly as to perceive the objects themſelves: Nor has this capacity been deſtroyed by ſin, any more than the intellectual faculty itſelf. And it is, perhaps, impoſſible it ſhould be deſtroyed, but by the deſtruction of the faculty by which we perceive at all. Tis accordingly the truth of fact, that

* Eccleſ. 11. 7.

that men, who, by their perſonal folly, have awfully corrupted their underſtandings, and moral taſte too, are yet capable of ſeeing, and feeling, a beauty and glory in characters that are the reverſe of their own. When placed before their view, in a ſtrong point of light, they command their approbation ; they can't but own their perception of an amiable glory in them ;—tho', at the ſame time, they are aſhamed, they are not themſelves the ſubjects of this glory.

What I aim at, in this additional tho't, is to ſhow, that, in the work of illumination, there is no "phyſically new ſenſe" implanted in the ſinner, any more than a phyſically new intellectual-faculty. If he had no intellectual capacity, it would be, not "morally" only, but "naturally", impoſſible he ſhould underſtand ; and it would be equally, and in the ſame ſenſe, impoſſible he ſhould perceive a beauty and excellency in any object of the mind, if he had no capacity in his nature for this perception. The idea of this beauty could not, in this caſe, be communicated to him. A phyſically new capacity muſt be put into him, in order to it ; that is to ſay, he muſt be made a phyſically different being from what he was, and from what others of his ſpecies are. But the bible no where gives us reaſon to expect the implantation of any ſuch new capacity : Nor indeed is there any need of it. The moral change that is made in the underſtanding, by the illuminations of the Spirit of God, will, at the ſame time, introduce a proportionable taſte, reliſh, or ſavour of divine and ſpiritual objects. This taſte may be, and actually is, wanting in vitiated and

corrupted

corrupted minds; and ſo is the juſt perception of revealed truth alſo: And they bear an exact proportion to each other. But if the underſtanding is enlightened in the things of the Spirit, a taſte for them will be a natural concomitant. When the mind is illuminated, ſo as to perceive revealed objects in their true point of light, it will perceive alſo a beauty and glory in them. Theſe perceptions are, as I imagine, inſeperable from each other. The conſtitution of man is ſuch, that he can't ſee the truth as it is Jeſus, and not perceive, at the ſame time, the excelling glory and importance of it. And if tis the caſe of any, that they have no taſte for ſpiritual and divine things, perceive no ſavour in them, it may with certainty be concluded, they have never been enlightened by the Spirit of God, ſo as to ſee them in their juſt and proper light.

3. The bodily eye, where there is a ſufficiency and clearneſs of external light, may yet be diſabled from ſeeing, at leaſt in a diſtinct and clear manner, by reaſon of natural or contracted weakneſs or diſorder. This is no uncommon caſe; tho' an unhappy one: Nor can it be remedied, but by a removal of the cauſe of it. Till this is done, the eye will not ſee clearly, tho' the rayes of the ſun ſhould be reflected from external objects with ever ſo bright a luſtre.

And the ſame is true, with reſpect to the eye of the mind. Such is its weak and diſordered ſtate, ſince the introduction of ſin into the world, that its ſight is obſcured, in a leſs or greater degree, in regard of all mankind. There is no

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man but has upon his mind ſome wrong biaſs or other, which is a like impediment to the eye of the underſtanding, that a film is to the eye of the body. We may be not ſufficiently aware of it, but tis a real truth, that prejudice, partiality, paſſion, pride, ſenſual and other luſts, are, as it were, the cataracts of the mind ; and, in proportion to their growth, will cloud its ſight ; yea, they may prevail to ſuch a degree of ſtrength as, in a great meaſure, to put out the eyes of the underſtanding. And this indeed has, in all ages, been the real truth of fact.

THE heathen world have ever ſo poorly underſtood, even, what they might have known of God, that they have all along lived in ignorance of him ; nay, what is much worſe, they have ſo corrupted their underſtanding, that, inſtead of being their guide, it has proved their ſeducer ; and in ſo groſs ſenſe, that there are no abſurdities in ſpeculation, nor abominations in practice, but they have been led into them. As the apoſtle ſpeaks, * " profeſſing themſelves wiſe, they became fools ; changing the truth of God into a lie, and ſerving the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed forever." Hence thoſe numerous paſſages of ſcripture, in which they are repreſented as having " darkened their hearts", and " blinded their minds" ; yea, and as having done this to ſo great a degree, as that they " could not ſee", tho' they had intellectual eyes for this purpoſe.

NOR is this blindneſs peculiar to the heathen world. Tis common to all the ſons of Adam, in a leſs or greater degree. Even the chriſtian world, who

* Rom. 1. 25.

who are favored with the light of the glorious Gospel, have so blinded their minds as to grope in the dark, as it were, at noon day; admiting, for truths of God, the grossest absurdities. For such are some of the doctrines taught, and received, in the church of Rome; as the worship of God by images; the use of living and dead saints as mediators with heaven, particularly the Virgin Mary, who has far more respect paid her than even Christ himself; the conversion of the bread and wine, in the sacrament, into the real body and blood of Christ, and the like: Than which, more palpable absurdities were never introduced into any pagan religion. They are indeed as shocking as were ever received for truths, unless we should except those doctrines of this same church, which teach, that she is infallibly right in establishing these monstrous errors; and that she takes a rational and christian method to gain the assent of men's minds to them, by inflicting on them the severest bodily tortures. These, it must be owned, are such an affront to the human understanding, and such a defiance of common sense, as can scarce be matched with a parallel, in any part of the heathen world, however invelop't with darkness.

Nor can it be said, even of Protestants, that they han't betrayed a strange blindness of mind, in the gross mistakes which they have embraced for sacred truths. It is indeed acknowledged, the light of the reformation opened to their view the enormous folly of some of the popish tenets; which they have accordingly rejected: But they still, many of them at least, receive absurdities of another kind, and very great ones too. There are numbers,

even in the proteſtant world, who have ſo ſtrangely loſt ſight, both of human reaſon, and divine revelation, as that they are ready to place the ſubſtance of chriſtianity in any thing, rather than in what it ought to be placed. Nay, to ſuch a degree have ſome been blinded, either by the god of this world, or their own vain imaginations, and fooliſh prejudices, as that they have encouraged themſelves in a wicked life, even from the very overtures of that inſtitution, which was purpoſely ſet on foot to deſtroy men's luſts and vices; pretending, that, by their "continuing in ſin", they ſhould give occaſion for the "greater illuſtration of the mercy of God" in their forgiveneſs. Amazing infatuation! Their "fooliſh hearts" muſt be extremely "darkened", or tis not poſſible, they ſhould have been led away by ſo ſenſeleſs a deluſion.

THE eyes of men's underſtanding being thus diſordered, the illuminating work of God's Spirit is deſigned for their help. And more a great deal is included in it, than meerly his giving them the external light of revelation. This light, tis true, is neceſſary. We can, in no other way, have an idea of God as "reconcilable to the world", and as "reconciling the world to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt". But tis, at the ſame time, true likewiſe, that we may enjoy this light, and not perceive the truths it would make manifeſt, ſo perceive them as to be ſavingly wro't upon by them. Some ſecret powerful influence of the divine Spirit muſt go along with it to effect this. Our "eyes muſt be opened", or we ſhall not "behold wondrous things out of God's law". Tis obſervable, many truths were "wrote in the law of Moſes, in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms

Pſalms concerning Chriſt" ; but even his diſciples entertained wrong conceptions of them, till he "opened their underſtandings to underſtand the ſcriptures". * In like manner, "the hope of the chriſtian's calling, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the ſaints", are externally revealed in the goſpel ; but the apoſtle Paul knew, notwithſtanding this, that the Epheſian believers needed to have "the eyes of their underſtanding enlightened", in order to their taking in a more clear and juſt idea of theſe things. † And if thoſe, who were believers already, needed further enlightening by the Spirit, in order to a more full proſpect of the "glory of the hope that was ſet before them", much more are his illuminating influences neceſſary for others. The truth is, "the vail that is on the hearts of ſinners muſt be taken away", or they will never "behold with open face the glory of the Lord", ſo as to be "changed by it into the ſame image from glory to glory" ; that is to ſay, the impediments to their intellectual ſight, occaſioned by the miſts of ſin and luſt, muſt, in a good meaſure, be removed away, or they will be unable to ſee revealed truths ſo as to be morally transformed by them. This calls for help, from the Spirit of God, beyond that which is afforded by the light of revelation, in itſelf ſimply conſidered. And it is principally by means of this further help, that that effect is wro't in ſinners, which is expreſſed in the ſacred writings by their "underſtandings being opened", by their being "called out of darkneſs", by their being "turned from darkneſs to light", and the like.

* Luk. 24. 44, 45. † Eph. 1. 17, 18.

THE Spirit of God, as I imagine, ordinarily begins this part of his illuminating work, by rouſing the conſciences of ſinners, and exciting in them an earneſt ſollicitude to become acquainted with the things that are connected with their everlaſting well-being. They were walking, it may be, "in the way of their own heart, and in the ſight of their their eyes", tho'tleſs of God, and unconcerned about their ſouls, and the important affairs of ſalvation. But, by ſome alarming providence, or ſeaſonable word of truth, ſuitably impreſſed on their minds by the influence of the Spirit, they are ſo changed from what they were, as to become ſeriouſly tho'tful; and their tho'ts, inſtead of running upon the vanities and gaites of the world, or the gratifications of time and ſenſe, are turned towards the infinitely greater concerns of eternal life. This is the natural effect of an awakened ſtate of mind; and it ſtrongly tends to check the power of ſin, and weaken the force of thoſe wrong biaſſes that darken the ſight of the mind. It is certainly a well adapted mean to this purpoſe; as truly ſo as external applications are to the bodily eye, to take off a film that hinders it from ſeeing. A ſenſe of ſin and guilt is ever accompanied, more or leſs, with diſtreſſing anxiety. This naturally puts the ſinner upon looking out for help; and upon doing it, in a ſober, ſerious and earneſt manner. Perſons under awakenings by the Spirit of God, eſpecially if they are ſtrong, and of any long continuance, are always tho'tful, and religiouſly ſo: And they are, for this reaſon, from the very make of the human ſoul, in a better diſpoſition, in a fiter temper, to be guided by the Spirit into the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jeſus, than when they were going on in their ſins,

ſins, unconcerned about the affairs of religion and another world. Their minds are now, in a meaſure, prepared for thoſe higher illuminations of the Spirit, which we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak of under the next head of analogy, to which I proceed.

4. THE bodily eye is not able fully to take in, what viſible objects are fited to communicate, by a ſudden tranſient glance only. It muſt be fixed on them, and view them with care and attention; or many things, both uſeful and important, will eſcape their notice, which yet they might have perceived, upon a more exact and cloſe examination of them.

AND the ſame is equally true, if not much more ſo, in reſpect of the eye of the mind. It can't perceive truth, unleſs in a few ſelf-evident inſtances, and not even in theſe at firſt, by a ſingle caſt of its diſcerning power. It muſt view it with care, deliberation and attention; otherwiſe it will not ſee it: To be ſure, not ſo as to be, in any conſiderable meaſure, impreſſed and influenced by it. And to the want of this care and attention it is very much owing, that ſo many truths are either wholly undiſcerned by multitudes, or diſcerned only in an imperfect, partial and confuſed manner. Eſpecially is this the caſe, in regard of religious truths; thoſe, I mean, which are not perceivable, but by the light of revelation. This light does not tranſmit, to thoſe who are favored with it, a conception of the truths, it would declare, either as to their evidence, meaning, uſefulneſs, or importance, whether they attend to them, or not. Tis indeed fited to convey into the mind this perception; and ſo as to renew and transform it: But it does this in the uſe of con-

ſideration and attention. Tis accordingly obſerveable, " the word" as " able to ſave the ſoul", is ſpoken of as " an ingrafted word". How does the cyon turn the ſap of a ſtock into its own nature, and cauſe it to bring forth good fruit, but by being faſtened upon it, and let into it ? " The word" turns the temper of the mind into its own nature, the ſame way, in the moral ſenſe, that is, by ſerious conſideration ; which does, as it were, faſten the word to the mind, let the one into the other, and unite them together. In like manner, it was by this ſame conſideration and attention that the " hearers of the word", reſembled, in the parable, by " ſeed ſowed in good ground, that bro't forth good fruit, and in plenty", are diſtinguiſhed from the other hearers, reſembled by " ſeed that was ſowed, and came to nothing" : Tis ſaid of them, " having heard the word, they kept it", that is, they retained it in their hearts by ſerious contemplation, by frequently employing their tho'ts on it ; wherein they differed from the other hearers, who, for want of this conſideration, ſuffered the word to be " ſnatched away from them", or to " wither", " having nothing to give it " root" ; or to be " choked with the cares of the preſent life". And the " doer of the word", who ſhall be " bleſſed in his deed", is diſtinguiſhed from the " hearer of it only", by his " looking into the law of liberty ; and continuing therein", that is, continuing to look therein. In other words, expreſſive of the thing meant, he is one that does not, in a heedleſs, curſory way only, caſt his eye upon the ſacred books of revelation, but looks into them with care & attention ; and he continues in the uſe of this care, " daily ſearching the ſcriptures", if he may find in them

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"the words of eternal life". Hence the advice, "take heed how you hear". * And again, "give the more earneſt heed to the things which you have heard, leaſt at any time you ſhould let them ſlip". † Hence David "tho't on his ways", as a proper means "to turn his feet into the path of God's teſtimonies". ‖ And hence alſo that ſolemn prayer of his, § "O Lord God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Iſrael, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the tho'ts of the heart of this people, and prepare their heart unto thee".

Now the Spirit of God, in managing the work of illumination, fixes the tho'ts of ſinners upon revealed objects, and ſo governs their exercile, as that divine truths are ſavingly opened to their view. I obſerved, under the former head, that he ordinarily begins this work by awakening, in the minds of ſinners, ſuch a concern about their future everlaſting well-being, as turns their tho'ts from the things of this world, to the things of God and their ſoul's ſalvation. I would now ſay, having thus excited in them a diſpoſition to ſober, religious conſideration, he proceeds in the work, by calling their attention to divine and ſpiritual objects, and holding their tho ts to them, by frequent and cloſe contemplation. So it was that he made David ſpiritually wiſer than his enemies. He did this, by keeping divine truths, and his mind together. That is, the account of the matter, "thou, thro' thy commandments, haſt made wiſer than mine enemies; *for they are ever with me*". ‡ So he "opened the heart of Lydia, that ſhe attended to the things which

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* Luk. 8. 18. † Heb. 2. 1. ‖ Pſal. 119. 59.
§ 1 Cron. 29. 18. ‡ Pſal. 119. 98.

were ſpoken of Paul". * She " held her mind to them", kept it ſtaid upon them by cloſe conſideration. And this ſhe did, as influenced hereto by the Spirit of God. He " opened her heart", ſo as that ſhe " thus attended". And, in like manner, he opens the hearts of others, by his ſecret and powerful influences, to think of the great concerns of their ſouls and eternity, and to think of them with an attention ſo earneſt and engaged, as that other tho'ts are excluded, at leaſt the force of them reſtrained within proper bounds and limits. They might before this have tho't of the great truths of religion and ſalvation, but their tho'ts of this kind were ſudden in their riſe, and ſhort in their continuance. They were ſoon " choked with the cares, or riches, or pleaſures of this life". But they have now a ſettled abode in them. They " meditate on them both in the day, and in the night". They are the principal objects that employ their ſerious conſideration. And tis ordinarily in concurrence with this awaken'd, and engaged attention, that the divine Spirit " ſhines into their hearts", ſo as to " give them the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt". Having excited in them a ſerious, conſiderate diſpoſition, he turns their tho'ts to the great doctrines of ſalvation, aſſiſts, ſuperintends and conducts the exerciſe of them, and in this way opens their underſtandings ſo as to diſcover to them the truths of revelation in their divinity, reality, excellency, uſefulneſs and neceſſity. And now it is, that they ſee divine objects in a different light from what they did before. They have now ſuch a ſight of God, as that they love him with their whole ſouls, and are diſpoſed to make him the ſupreme object of their hope,

* Acts. 16. 14.

hope, truſt and confidence. They have now ſuch a ſight of Chriſt, as one "able to ſave even to the uttermoſt, all that come to God by him", that they can readily venture their eternal concerns in his hands. They have now ſuch a ſight of ſin, in its odious nature, as well as ruinous tendency, as that they find within themſelves a heart to hate it, and to abhor themſelves for ever having had any love to it. They have now ſuch a ſight of holineſs, in the excellency of its nature, as well as the uſefulneſs of its tendency, that they more heartily deſire nothing, than that they may "be holy even as God is holy". In a word, they have now ſuch a ſight of the wiſdom, the holineſs, the righteouſneſs and mercy of the goſpel ſcheme of "redemption, thro' the blood of Chriſt", that they can intirely acquieſce in it; neither expecting, nor deſiring to be ſaved in any other way. They "count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge" they now have "of Chriſt Jeſus their Lord".

5. I HAVE yet to ſay, in the fifth and laſt place, the bodily eye may be ſo circumſtanced, as to be incapable of ſeeing diſtinctly and clearly, but by the intervention of foreign help. A common caſe this. There are multitudes, eſpecially among thoſe in years, whoſe eyes are in ſuch a ſtate, as that the objects of ſight appear as thro' a miſt; and they ſee them in an indiſtinct, and confuſed manner only: But, by the help of proper glaſſes, the rayes of light are ſo collected, and thrown upon the eye, as that this obſcurity is taken away, and they are enabled to ſee with clearneſs and preciſion.

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And thus it is, in a great meaſure, with the eye of the mind. It may not be able to diſcern truth, in a thouſand inſtances, with clearneſs and certainty, till, by foreign aid, it is placed before their view in a ſpecial point of light. They can now readily perceive it to be truth, and ſo perceive it too, as to feel the beauty and excellency of it; and the light may break in upon them with ſo bright a luſtre, as to occaſion even their wonder, that they could not diſcern it before.

And, perhaps, this is eminently one of the ways, in which the Spirit of God opens the eyes of men's underſtandings to ſee the truths of revelation, in their certainty, ſweetneſs and infinite importance. He may ſo ſuperintend and govern the exerciſe of their tho'ts with reference to them; their ideas, under his guidance, may be ſet in ſuch order, and placed in ſuch an eaſie relation to each other, as that the mind ſhall ſee things in a point of light it never did before, and never would, or could, have done, had it not been for this intervening help. By giving their tho'ts this ſpecial direction, and connection, they may have the moſt lively ſight of that, they could not diſcern before, or ſaw only, as it were, in the dark, in a partial, indiſtinct and confuſed manner. And let it not ſeem ſtrange to any, that the Spirit of God ſhould, in this way, ſhine into men's hearts, "calling them out of darkneſs into marvellous light". He has inſpired ſome, even among the ſons of men, with ſuch dexterity and ſkill, that, by putting together, and placing in a proper point of light, the ideas that conſtitute theſe and thoſe natural truths, they can eaſily convey a perception

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tion of them to others, and in caſes too, in which, perhaps, they would never have had this perception, had they been left to themſelves, and been the ſole guides of their own tho'ts. And ſhall not the Spirit himſelf have an ability ſo to place revealed objects before the view of men, as that they ſhall be able to ſee them ſo as they never did, or could, before? He moſt certainly has this ability. And tho' he may, in the work of illumination, ſo mix the exertments of it, with the actings of men's own faculties, as that they can't eaſily, if at all, diſtinguiſh the one from the other; yet, it is doubtleſs principally owing to this intervening influence of his, that they are enabled to ſee "ſpiritually" the things, he has "externally" revealed in the ſacred books of ſcripture.

THE influences of the Spirit, in helping men to this new and ſpiritual ſight of the things pertaining to ſalvation, are ſometimes diſpenſed in ſuch a meaſure, as that light breaks in upon their minds ſuddenly and perceptibly; inſomuch that they are able to ſay, at ſuch a time, "the eyes of my underſtanding were opened", I had then ſuch a ſight of God, of Chriſt, of my ſelf, and of the goſpel-way of ſalvation, as gives me reaſon aſſuredly to think, the life of grace was now effectually begun in me. But commonly the work of illumination is carried on, in a more gradual and leſs perceptible way. The ſubjects of it can only ſay in general, "whereas I was once blind, I now ſee". Their light, like the "morning dawn", gradually and indiſcernably "ſhines more and more" till it increaſes "to perfect day".

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SOME, perhaps, may be diſpoſed to think, if not to ſpeak, contemptuouſly of this influence of the Spirit, by which men's underſtandings are opened to ſee divine truths in a new and different light, becauſe tis, to them, inconceivable how he ſhould operate on them, ſo as to give them this perception. But the inconceivableneſs of the thing is no juſt objection againſt the truth of it. Do thoſe who move this difficulty know, how the objects of bodily ſight affect the ſoul, by introducing into it thoſe ſenſations we have certain experience of? Can they deſcribe the modus of their operation, pointing out the way in which impreſſions on the viſive organs convey perceptions into the mind? Till they find themſelves able to do this, they can't, with any face of modeſty or reaſon, object againſt the influence of God's Spirit upon the underſtandings of men, becauſe the manner of it may be ſecreted from us. Tis indeed an objection of no more weight againſt the Spirit's acting upon the minds of men, that we know not how he does it, than tis againſt the actings of external objects upon them by the intervention of the ſenſes, that we are ignorant how this is done. The one is as eaſie to conceive of as the other; or rather, they are both equally beyond human comprehenſion. Nor is it at all incredible, that the God that made our ſouls, and is therefore intimately, and perfectly acquainted with them, and all the avenues into them, ſhould be able to influence them in ways we are not formed with capacities to inveſtigate. It would be highly unreaſonable, I might ſay, groſly abſurd, to ſuppoſe, he had not this ability: Tho', he ought always to be conſidered as exerting it,

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not only in conſiſtency with the nature of men's faculties, but in concurrence with them, and ſo as to preſerve and promote, not ſuperſede, the proper uſe and employment of them. And in this way it is, as we have ſeen, that he both begins, and carries on, the work of illumination. He awakens men's conſideration ; he fixes it on the great things pertaining to ſalvation, keeping theſe and their minds continually together ; he directs and aſſiſts the exerciſe of their tho'ts on them ; and, in a word, ſo conducts and governs this whole affair, as that the reſult is, their ſeeing revealed truths ſo as to be no longer in the dark, but to become " the children of the day", and " to walk in light" : All which is both eaſily intelligible, and highly reaſonable ; tho' the modus of the Spirit's influence herein ſhould be unknown, and not to be deſcribed.

A VARIETY of remarks might now eaſily and naturally be deduced, from the preceeding diſcourſe, which would further tend to illuſtrate the doctrine of the " Spirit's illuminating work", as well as to correct ſome miſtaken notions about it; but I muſt confine myſelf to two only, leaſt I ſhould put your patience to too long a tryal.

THE firſt is, that the divine Spirit, in enlightening men's minds, lets them into the knowlege of no truths, but thoſe that are contained in the ſacred books of ſcripture. Theſe were " wrote by holy men", as " moved and inſpired by the holy Ghoſt" ; and they exhibit the whole mind of God, ſo far as he tho't it needful, or proper, to make a revelation of it. The deſign therefore

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of the Spirit, in his illuminating-work, is not to enlarge the object of faith, by revealing any new truths; but to ſet thoſe that are already revealed in ſuch a point of light before the minds of men, as that they ſhall have a juſt, ſtrong and lively perception of them, in their divinity, as well as excellency and importance. That light, which, under the influence of God's Spirit, gives life and vigor to the "new-creation", is "the light of the glory of God", as it is manifeſted in the ſcripture. No other light is neceſſary; no other is ever made uſe of by the holy Ghoſt, in "enlightening the eyes of men's underſtanding". He conveys into their minds no light, no knowledge, no ideas whatever, but as derived from that old, publick, ſtanding revelation of God, THE HOLY BIBLE. To ſuppoſe otherwiſe would be, in true conſequence, to reflect diſhonor on this ſacred book, as tho' it did not exhibit the mind of God in all things neceſſary, in order to man's ſalvation. For if, in the work of illumination, new truths were diſcovered, truths the ſcripture had not before revealed, it would be an incomplete, inſufficient revelation; as needing to be ſupply'd by new inſpiration from the holy Ghoſt. It could not therefore be juſtly ſaid of it, that it is "profitable", ſo as that "the man of God might be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works"; that it is "able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation"; able to "ſave their ſouls"; and to "build them up, and give them an inheritance among all them that are ſanctified"; all which is expreſly affirmed of it, as let into men's minds, and actuated when there, by the influence of the Spirit of grace.

It obviouſly, and neceſſarily, follows from this remark, that thoſe are groſly deluded, not divinely illuminated, who imagine, that the " teachings of the Spirit", under the goſpel, are ever afforded to men, either " without" the revealed written word, or in " oppoſition" to it. Would to God it were a falſhood to affirm it of any, that they were thus deluded! But it has been, and now is, too common a caſe in the chriſtian world; eſpecially among thoſe, who, under the influence of an over-heated imagination, have been able to ſee viſions; or to hear voices, audibly ſpeaking, or ſoftly whiſpering in their ears; or to feel themſelves ſtrongly impreſſed with this or that notion, or as ſtrongly impelled to this or that action. Under ſuch warmth of imagination, there is ſcarce any thing too abſurd for men's faith, or practice. Their ſuppoſed immediate, extraordinary communications of light and knowlege from the Spirit of God, they ſubſtitute in the room of ſcripture; making theſe, not that, the rule by which they walk. If they pay any regard to the ſacred books of inſpiration, tis only as they may be interpreted to fall in with that ſuperior teaching, they vainly conceit they are under. In their own apprehenſions, they are above inſtruction from the oracles of God; as having a more ſafe and ſure guide, even the Spirit of truth, who is their immediate director. Tis ſtrange, any ſhould ſo groſly deceive themſelves. For nothing is ever ſuggeſted to, or impreſſed on, the minds of men, by the divine Spirit, but in perfect harmony with the revealed truths of ſcripture: He makes no diſcoveries of any kind, but from this ſacred book. His work lies in ſetting goſpel-truth in ſuch a convincing,

convincing, commanding, ſtriking light, before the eye of the underſtanding, as that it may anſwer the great and good purpoſes for which it was revealed. The "inward" teaching of the Spirit ought therefore, in no caſe, upon no occaſion, to be "oppoſed" to what is "outwardly" taught in the revelations of ſcripture. Tis impoſſible, as "the ſcripture was given by inſpiration of God", that there ſhould be any diſagreement between what he "inwardly" teaches, and what he has cauſed to be "externally" wrote. "What ſaith the ſcripture"? ought therefore to be the grand queſtion in all ſuppoſed illuminations, manifeſtations, ſuggeſtions, and diſcoveries from the Spirit. If they agree not with this infallible rule, they are not from him; and we may be as ſure of it, as that he is the revealer of the truths contained in the bible. There is indeed no deluſion more dangerous than this, of depending upon the teaching, and guidance, of the Spirit, "without" the word, or in "oppoſition" to it. Men have now a rule, that ſuperſedes the bible, even the immediate dictates of the Spirit of God; and ſo are prepared for whatever deluſions a heated imagination, or ſubtle devil, may ſuggeſt to them, under the diſguiſe of divine communications; and this, in oppoſition to the cleareſt reaſon, as well as moſt expreſs revelation. How many enthuſiaſts, vainly conceiting they were extraordinarily illuminated by the Spirit, have proceeded from one abſurdity to another, till they have run quite wild! There is ſcarce any thing ſo extravagant, but they have been the patrons of it, and under the pretence too of being immediately inſtructed by God to be ſo. We cannot be too careful in guarding againſt

againſt any ſuppoſed influences, dictates, or manifeſtations from the Spirit, to the neglect of the ſcripture, much more in contradiction to it. This has never yet failed of betraying men into folly; and the ſame effect may always be look't for from the ſame cauſe. To wait for the Spirit, and to depend on him, for teaching and guidance "without the word", or in "oppoſition to it", is an endleſs path of error. As one expreſſes it, * "If there be any deluſions in the world, we muſt own this as the BELZEEBUB among them. What rule have I to try the Spirit by, but the word revealed, and written, in the ſcriptures? As St. John ſays, "try the Spirits, whether they are of God or not". But how ſhall I know, whether I am taught of the Spirit, or not, unleſs the word directs me?— The pretence of the Spirit, in its dictates of truth, "beſides and above the word", will fetch arguments from the ſame Spirit to maintain them, tho' the groſſeſt deluſions; and ſo the word, and all ordinary means of reducing ſuch to their right wits, become wholly uſeleſs and impoſſible. We have had too many years experience of the diſmal ſad effects of this grand principle of enthuſiaſm.— Admit once of new-lights and viſions of the Spirit, and you cannot keep out damnable errors from following after".

THE other remark, deducible from the preceding diſcourſe, is, that God, in the work of illumination, conſiders men as endow'd with intellectual and moral powers, and conducts towards them as ſuch, by influencing the exerciſe

* John Stillingfleet, "his divine preſence in the places of religious worſhip", pag. 222, 223.

of theſe powers ſo as, in "this way", to effect the good pleaſure of his grace in them. Tis true, the light of truth held forth in the ſacred books of ſcripture, that light by which ſinners are "turned from darkneſs", and enabled to "behold the glory of the Lord", ſo as to be "changed into the ſame image from glory to glory", is abſolutely the gift of God. He firſt provided it, and then ſupernaturally ſent it down from above. Tis no more owing to men, than the underſtanding-faculty itſelf, they are the ſubjects of. Both the faculty, and the object, are wholly and equally of God; the latter, as really as the former, and as excluſively of all human ſkill, will, or exertments of any kind whatever. The work of illumination therefore ſuppoſes, both a "faculty" already planted in men's nature, rendering them capable of being enlightened; and the exiſtence of "light", whereby it is made poſſible this ſhould be done: And it accordingly lies, not in the phyſical infuſion of any power or capacity, they were not before poſſeſſed of; nor yet in the communication of any other light than that, which is already provided and revealed in the ſcripture: I ſay, it conſiſts in neither of theſe things, but in ſuch influences of the Spirit, as are wiſely and powerfully ſuited, ſo to bring together the "underſtanding-faculty" in men, and "goſpel-truth", its proper object, as that the latter ſhall be perceived, believed and underſtood, to the purpoſes of ſaving and everlaſting good. This is all that is wanted; this is all that the Spirit does in the affair of illumination; and this he effects—how? Not by conveying into men's minds the "ſalutary truth", either in regard of its evidence, or juſt import,

import, in the way he provided it, that is, without the intervening uſe of their faculties; but in concurrence herewith, and as influencing and conducting their exerciſe, ſo as that the work ſhall be accompliſhed. How ſhould reaſonable creatures be bro't to perceive, and underſtand, the ſacred truths of revelation, as to their evidence, or meaning, but by the uſe of their intellectual powers? Why were theſe truths commited to writing, under the guidance of the holy Ghoſt? Why ſolemnly atteſted to from heaven, and tranſmited to after-ages, but that men might read, ſtudy, believe and underſtand them? But how ſhould they do this, unleſs by the exerciſe of their minds in thinking, conſidering, and reaſoning? Tis readily acknowledged, ſin has "darkened men's hearts", and "blinded their eyes", the eyes of their underſtanding; inſomuch that they will never ſee "the truth as it is in Jeſus", ſo as to perceive its divinity and beauty, and feel its transforming power, unleſs by the influence of the illuminating Spirit. But what kind of influence is this? Not of a kind, we may be aſſured, that ſuperſedes the uſe, or ſets aſide the exerciſe, of men's intellectual powers. It is rather adapted, in its nature and tendency, to excite, aſſiſt, ſuperintend, conduct and govern, the exerciſe of theſe powers, ſo as that, in "this way", the light of truth ſhall be let into their minds, and exiſt and operate there as a new and powerful ſpring of action. It is a kind of influence that is perfectly ſuited to the conſtitution of men, as reaſonable creatures; rendering their endeavours, in the uſe of means, highly fit; yea, neceſſary: Nor otherwiſe would it be eaſie, if poſſible, to juſtifie the

wiſdom, or propriety, of a "written revelation", atteſted to by God, and intended for univerſal and perpetual uſe. If the divine Spirit, in the "conveyance of the ſaving truth", does every thing without man, to the ſetting aſide of all motion, action, or exerciſe of the human ſoul with reference to it, he might directly reveal this truth from heaven to all, God ever intended ſhould be the happy ſubjects of it, to the excluſion of the "written word", as well as the uſe of men's faculties: Nor can any good reaſon be given, why he don't thus reveal the truth to every man, but that the work of illumination is carried on by the intervening uſe of means, and the concurring exerciſe of human faculties. And tis upon this ſuppoſition only, that thoſe, to whom the goſpel has been ſent, are capable of being blamed or puniſhed, for not admiting into their minds the truths it reveals. How otherwiſe could they, in reaſon, be accounted faulty? If men have nothing to do in any kind, with reſpect to the admitance of the ſaving truth into their minds, but the Spirit of God does all, ſo as intirely to exclude all exertments of their's, in the uſe of any means, with what equity could they be blamed or puniſhed, ſhould it never be admited there? Will the righteous judge of all the earth account men ſinners, and worthy of condemnation, for not being poſſeſſed of that, in order to the poſſeſſion of which they have nothing to do themſelves, and all doings of their's would be uſeleſs and impertinent? This would be, in reality of conſtruction, to call them ſinners, and to condemn them, for not taking God's work out of his hands, and doing that themſelves which it lay with him to do, abſolutely without them.

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The ſcripture no where places this matter in a light thus injurious to the name, and diſhonorary to the perfections and government of God. On the contrary, if men admit not the light of goſpel-truth into their minds, tis attributed to themſelves, the fault is charged upon them, and they are eſteemed worthy, on this account, of a heavier condemnation than other men. Says our Savior himſelf, * " this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil". " If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins". † " If I had not come, and ſpoken to them, they had not had ſin ; but now they have no cloke for their ſins". ‡ " Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". § " O that thou hadſt known in this thy day the things of thy peace"!--" How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings ! but ye would not". ‖ Surely, theſe texts are incapable of any real meaning, if, in the work of illumination, the Spirit of God makes no uſe of man, of any of his faculties, or exertments, but conveys the ſaving truth abſolutely without him, and ſo as to ſet aſide all means, and all endeavours that are human. How is it poſſible, in this caſe, that it ſhould be the fault of men, if they are not the ſubjects of this truth ? It can't be ſuppoſed, that they ſhould be tho't worthy, either of blame, or of puniſhment.

THE plain truth is, men are not only endow'd with intellectual & moral powers, but charged by

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* Joh. 3. 19. † Joh. 8. 24. ‡ Joh, 15. 22.
§ Joh. 5. 40. ‖ Matth. 23. 37. Luk. 13. 34.

their maker with the care, uſe & exerciſe of them. And tis upon this foundation only, that they become capable, in the nature of the thing, of moral government and of being counted proper ſubjects, either of blame or puniſhment. And this is as true in regard of matters of pure revelation, as of meer reaſon. Wherein men can uſe the faculties they are endow'd with, and are called of God to uſe them, but neglect to do ſo; or, what is worſe, miſuſe them to purpoſes for which they were not betruſted with them, they are juſtly chargeable with guilt, and as juſtly liable to puniſhment: But to ſpeak of them, as either blameable, or puniſhable, wherein they have nothing to do, wherein no exerciſe of any faculty they are poſſeſſed of is required, or expected, is, in reality of ſenſe, to ſay, that they may be blamed, or puniſhed for nothing; which is, in itſelf, a downright moral contradiction.

THE reſult from all which is, that the Spirit of God, in the work of illumination, ſo manages his influences, as that men, notwithſtanding what he does, have ſo much to do themſelves that it will be properly their fault, and juſtly chargeable upon them as ſuch, if they remain deſtitute of the ſaving truth. It would therefore be a vain thing in any to excuſe their ignorance, or unbelief, of revealed truths, under the pretence, that the divine Spirit has not been pleaſed, as yet, ſavingly to enlighten their minds. I ſee not, I own, but this would be a good excuſe, and ſuch an one as could never be reaſonably ſet aſide, if the work of illumination was accompliſhed without any exerciſe, motion, or activity, of the human mind; if the Spirit of God was agent in this matter, ſo

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as utterly to exclude all exertments of men in any ſhape or form. But if the influences of theSpirit, in the performance of this work, are accommodated to the make of men ; excite, aſſiſt, ſuperintend and guide the exertments of their faculties ; and co-operate with theſe exertments, there is no difficulty in the caſe. All due honor is given to the divine Spirit, and men are agents, notwithſtanding his influence ; and may juſtly fall under blame, and become liable to puniſhment. This is certainly the light in which the ſcripture always places this matter, and the light in which we muſt view it, if we would entertain right conceptions of it.

Let us then, as the concluſion of all, conſider the intellectual faculties, it has pleaſed God to implant in our natures, as betruſtments committed to us for improvement. And let us make the beſt uſe of them we can ; eſpecially, in order to our believing and knowing thoſe ſacred truths of ſcripture, which are connected with our eternal well-being in the future world. Let us daily look into this book of God, and uſe the utmoſt care, caution, deliberation, diligence and attention, that we may be, not only convinced by the evidence he has given, that it came from him, but let into the juſt import of the great things contained in it. For, it was purpoſely wrote by inſpiration of God, to furniſh our minds with the knowledge, both of the evidence, and meaning, of thoſe truths which may be "ſavingly" profitable to us. Yet, let us not depend upon the exerciſe of our own powers, as tho' we needed no help, and could of ourſelves, without aſſiſtance

from above, attain to ſuch a faith in, and underſtanding of, revealed truths, as would avail to our inheriting eternal life. This would be to deceive ourſelves into ruin. For it ought to be ſeriouſly remembered, our thinking and reaſoning faculty is greatly weakened and diſordered by means of ſin. We have "darkened our hearts"; and are indeed ſo under the government of prejudice, paſſion, and diverſe luſts, both of the fleſh, and of the mind, that we ſtand in abſolute need of the influence and guidance of the Spirit of truth, that our underſtandings may be enlightened in the knowledge of thoſe things that pertain to the kingdom of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt. Let it affect us to think, that God ſhould ſo pity us, in that ſtate of ignorance and blindneſs we had bro't ourſelves into by ſin, as to make proviſion for our being enlightened in all ſpiritual knowledge & underſtanding. Let us be thankful to him for the light of revelation, and for the holy Spirit to give us to ſee this light, and ſo to ſee it as to be changed by it into the divine likeneſs, from glory to glory. Theſe are favors unſpeakably great, and call for our humble and thankful adorations before the God of all grace. And let us expreſs our gratitude to him, not only by the words of our mouths, but by a ſuitable care to comport with the deſigns of his mercy, in thus contriving and opening a way for our knowing "the truth as it is in Jeſus", ſo knowing it as to be eternally ſaved by it. Let us endeavour to get our hearts impreſſed with a deep ſenſe of the need we ſtand in of the illuminating influences of the good Spirit. Let us importunably ſeek to God for them. Let us do

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nothing to "grieve the Spirit of God", and provoke him to depart away from us. Let us cheriſh his motions, and put ourſelves under his guidance and direction: So may we hope that he will, by helping, and ſuperintending the exerciſe of our faculties, "ſhew us God's ways, teach us his paths", and give us ſuch a view of the great truths of revelation, as that we ſhall believe them, and ſo feel the force of them, as to be formed by them to a meetneſs for heavenly glory.

And if we have any of us been ſo enlightened by the Spirit, as that we are the ſubjects of that faith in Chriſt, and knowledge in ſpiritual and divine things, which are connected with the "juſtification of life", let us bow the knee in grateful acknowledgements of the rich grace of God, that has been manifeſted towards us. And let it be our daily care to grow in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, and to get filled with all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding. Our own endeavours, in the uſe of proper means, are neceſſary in order hereunto. We have no reaſon to expect the aſſiſtances of the divine Spirit in any other way. Tis accordingly ſeen in experience, that "grace", no more than nature, if neglected, and not wiſely improved, will attain to any conſiderable degree of perfection. All our powers, at firſt, are feeble and lanquid; and tis in a gradual way, under the divine bleſſing, that they acquire ſtrength, and riſe to any conſiderable height in glory. Tho', upon our coming into the world, we are endowed with all the powers which are proper to the human kind; yet, they are nothing more, in their original implantation, than meer ſimple capacities;

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and it is by time and exercise, that they gradually dilate, expand, and grow to the maturity, they are fited to attain to. And this is very much the case, with respect to our moral and spiritual powers. They are small, and weak, in their beginning; but capable of growth, and naturally tend to it; and will, under the influence of heaven, continually increase in strength, and go on towards perfection, if they are duly exercised. I say, if they are duly exercised; because they depend, in a great measure, upon our use of them in order to their growth and increase. And tis indeed impossible, consistently with the established order of God's communicating his grace, that christians should make any great attainments in it, while they are slothful and indolent, and won't exert themselves with vigor, under the advantages they are favored with. Hence they are called upon in scripture, not only to depend upon the influence of the Spirit of truth, but to exert themselves, under it, in all suitable ways. Hence their "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ", is the matter of a command, what they are exhorted to as their incumbent duty. * And hence also tis enjoined on them, to "give all diligence to add to their faith,—knowledge, and other christian graces". † In like manner, they are applied to, being "newborn babes", to "desire", in order to use, "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby"; ‡ yea, they are "besought by the Lord Jesus, that, as they have received how they ought to walk, so they would abound more and more". § If therefore those, who are possessed of

* 2. Pet. 3. 8. † 2 Pet. 1. 5. ‡ 1 Pet. 2. 2.
§ 1 Thess. 4. 1.

of the truth, would be thorow proficients in the faith and knowledge of Chriſt, they muſt not let their underſtandings lie by neglected, but take care to employ them diligently, in an attendance on all the means of ſpiritual inſtruction; at the ſame time, ſeeking to God for, and depending on, the help and guidance of his Spirit, that they may ſo abound in the knowledge of God's will, as that their hearts may be more and more eſtabliſhed in goodneſs.

Such indeed is the weakneſs of our minds, and ſo many the ways, in which, thro' prejudice, or ſome wrong biaſs or other, our intellectual ſight may be obſtructed, that we ſhall, in a degree, remain in ignorance and darkneſs, notwithſtanding all that we can do ourſelves, or that the Spirit of God will do for us, by his enlightening influences. We muſt put off mortality, before we may expect a perfectly illuminated mind. But tho' light, without any mixture, even, of criminal darkneſs, is not compatible with our preſent ſtate of frailty and imperfection; yet we may gradually grow in the faith and knowledge of the truth, ſo as that we ſhall perceive it more clearly and fully, feel more and more of its beauty and force, and be more and more wro't upon by it to our being dialy formed to a greater "meetneſs for the inheritance of the ſanctified by faith in Jeſus Chriſt".

In order whereto, having commited ourſelves to the guidance of him who is "light", and in "whom there is no darkneſs", we ſhould heedfully watch over all the propenſities of our nature, left

leſt they ſhould inſinuate themſelves into our underſtandings, and give a wrong turn to our tho'ts; and perpetually be upon our guard, that neither vanity, nor ſingularity, nor intereſt, nor any thing elſe, break in upon our integrity, and prevent our making the higheſt attainments in the knowledge of ſpiritual and divine truths. And by a conſtant heedful uſe of ſuitable care, we may hope, under the influences of the good Spirit, that "the light that is in us will not be darkneſs", but a "ſhining light" that will "ſhine more and more", with an increaſing brightneſs, till it lets us into the light of "perfect day". Which God grant may be the portion of us all, thro' Jeſus Chriſt! AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

The Queſtion anſwered, what ſhall I do that I may have eternal Life?

MATTHEW XIX. 16.

"And behold, one came and ſaid unto him, good maſter, what good thing ſhall I do that I may have eternal life"?

THE ſtory, of which my text is part, is an obſervable one, and would, if duly meditated on, naturally give riſe to a variety of notes, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs": But my preſent deſign, and the limits of this diſcourſe, forbid my taking any further notice of it, than may be occaſionally proper, in order to illuſtrate the words I have ſelected to engage your attention, at this time.

THEY

THEY contain an addreſs to our bleſſed Lord, by way of inquiry, upon no leſs an affair than that of eternal life. And the following particulars are obſervable in it.

THE "perſon" making this inquiry; the "manner" in which he made it; and finally, "the enquiry itſelf".

1. As to the "perſon" making this inquiry, he is deſcribed, in the text, in a general way only. "Behold one came and ſaid unto him". But, in the 20th verſe, he is pointed out as a perſon in the prime and flower of life. "The young man ſaith unto him". The evangeliſt Luke, in his narrative of this ſtory, ſpeaks of him as a perſon of figure, one cloathed with authority. "A certain ruler aſked him". And all the evangeliſts, who have related this ſtory, unite in deſcribing him as wealthy, one that "had great poſſeſſions".

THESE are the particulars deſcriptive of the perſon, who came to our Savior with the queſtion in my text. He had probably juſt come to the age of man, and to have a large eſtate at his own diſpoſal. And, being a young man of fortune, and perhaps of ſuperior accompliſhments, he was ſoon taken notice of, and, while a youth, made a ruler among the Jews. He could ſcarce have been placed under circumſtances more likely to make him totally tho'tleſs of another life. And yet, in the height of youth, and all the enſnarements accompanying riches and honor, he extends his view beyond this preſent world, and inquires what he ſhould do to obtain an inheritance in the better eternal world?

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An inſtructive example this ! And I may pertinently take occaſion from it, to beſpeak our young men of rank and fortune ; putting them upon their guard, leſt they ſhould live unmindful of their ſouls, and the ſtate that is beyond the grave. Your danger, in this reſpect, is awfully great. You are now in that period of life, which is attended with peculiar temptations, as well as advantages ; and the temptations, in regard of you, are much greater, and more numerous, than in regard of ordinary young people. O how common is it for young perſons, in your circumſtances, to abandon themſelves to levity and vanity ; " walking in the way of their own hearts, and in the ſight of their own eyes, not knowing", not conſidering, " that God will bring them into judgment for theſe things" ! How common to pervert the deſign of God's beſtowments on them, by taking occaſion from them to gratifie their luſts, whether of the fleſh, or mind ! How common to give themſelves up to the enjoyments of time and ſenſe ; living in the world, as tho' they had no faith in God, no faith in revelation, no ſenſe of religion, no concern about their exiſtence beyond the grave ! O take heed, that you alſo be not drawn aſide, and enticed, by the amuſements and pleaſures of this vain and evil world ! And while ſo many of your age, and circumſtances in life, are practically ſaying to their ſouls, " take your eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry" ; let it be your inquiry, " what ſhall we do to inherit eternal life" ? And be wanting in no labors, nor in the uſe of any proper means, that you may finally, of the mercy of God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt, come to the enjoyment of it Re-

member,

member, if you don't get into ſuch a ſtate in this world, as that, when you leave it, you may enter upon the happy life, that is the great promiſe of the goſpel, you muſt ſuffer the "ſecond death": Nor will the diſtinction, in outward and civil reſpects, it has pleaſed God to make between you and others, ſerve in the leaſt to ſecure you herefrom; it will rather be a means to render the pains of this death the more dreadful and intolerable.

But it ſhould be the care, not only of young perſons of figure & fortune, but of every condition, to inquire "what they ſhall do to inherit eternal life"? And to purſue this enquiry to effect. This is the "one thing needful". Nothing can be propoſed to you of more ſerious weight, and awful importance. Your everlaſting well-being is connected herewith. And what more proper ſeaſon for the buſineſs of religion, and the concerns of the ſoul and ſalvation, than the age of youth? Now is eminently "the accepted time, and the day of ſalvation". Now you are under the greateſt advantages to ſecure the favor of God, and an intereſt in the only conſtituted redeemer of ſinners. Now, if you ſeek to God for his mercy, you will have the moſt probable proſpect of finding it: But if you loſe this opportunity, you will never have a better, and you know not that you ſhall have any other. O be perſuaded to be ſeriouſly tho'tful about your ſouls, and their happy exiſtence in another world! Beg of God to impreſs your minds with a juſt ſenſe of the importance of ſpiritual and eternal concerns. And if ſuch a ſenſe has been excited in any of you, don't ſuffer it to wear off; but let it quicken and

invigorate

invigorate your endeavours, in the uſe of all appointed means, that you may be formed to a meetneſs for that life in heaven, which ſhall never have an end.

THERE is yet another thing, in the character of this young man, worthy of notice; and that is, his regular life. He was no fornicator, nor adulterer, nor lyar, nor prophane ſwearer; but ſeems rather to have been a youth of a ſober, blameleſs converſation. He therefore reply'd, when our Savior bid him "keep the commandments", as in the 20th ver. "maſter, all theſe have I obſerved from my youth". And he probably ſpake the truth, according to the ſenſe, in which he had been inſtructed, by the jewiſh teachers, to underſtand the law. There is no reaſon to think, but he had abſtained from thoſe follies, which too commonly pollute the lives of young people. And beſides this, he had, in all likelihood, been externally devout; a worſhipper of the God of his fathers; an obſerver of the ſabbath, and the various rites of the Moſaic diſpenſation; a man ſtrictly chaſte and temperate in his life; and, in a word, as "touching the righteouſneſs that is of the law", externally "blameleſs". And it was much to his honor, that he had been ſo far religious. Tis obſerveable, it was more eſpecially upon the account of his blameleſs ſober life, that our Savior "loved him". So ſpeaks the evangeliſt Mark, * "THEN Jeſus beholding him, loved him. THEN, that is, "when he had anſwered, and ſaid, all theſe have I obſerved from my youth".

* Chap. 10. ver. 21.

I MAY properly take occaſion from hence, to urge upon our young people a care to conform their external practice to the divine law. This, it is true, will not ſuffice to conſtitute you good men, in the eſtimation either of the law, or goſpel. If you go no further, you will ſtill lack that which is abſolutely needful. But for all this, a freedom from the outward acts of ſin, is very commendable: Nor is it (as the times now are) a deſpicable attainment. Would to God, it could be ſaid with truth of all our youths, they are not given "to rioting and wontoneſs"; they "have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs"; they prophane neither the day, nor name of God; but are, to all appearance, virtuous and ſober! It would rejoice the hearts of many ſollicitous parents, and yield a comfortable proſpect, with reference to the riſing generation. But alas! there are too many, among our young people, who give a looſe to their ſenſual inclinations, and are even ſcandalous in their purſuits of carnal pleaſures. And when ſuch numbers of young perſons are ſo ſhamefully attached to the vanities of time and ſenſe, denying themſelves ſcarce any thing their heart can wiſh, or their eyes look upon; how happily diſtinguiſhed would you be, from the many of your age, ſhou'd you "flee youthful luſts", and eſcape thoſe follies whereby their lives are polluted? Should you be chaſte and modeſt, ſober and temperate; in all things conforming your external behaviour to the divine law? Tis true indeed, as I juſt now obſerved, freedom from vice, and a meer external conformity to the law, won't argue that men are poſſeſt of the "real power of godlineſs". There muſt be a "heart purified by faith", as well as the outward appear-

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ance of virtue in the life. But this notwithſtanding, a freedom from ſin, eſpecially in inſtances that are groſs and hainous, is infinitely better than an allowed indulgence to vice and wickedneſs. And tis a glory to a young man, or woman, to be unlike to the multitudes of their age, who are ſhamefully debauched in their morals. Tis indeed an agreeable ſight to behold one and another, in the bloom of life, avoiding this and the other bad courſe, abſtaining from this and the other corrupt cuſtom, and maintaining a care to be honeſt, ſober and chaſte; tho' they ſhould not have attained ſo high as to be "transformed in their minds by the renewing of the holy Ghoſt". Our Savior loved the young man ſpoken of in my text, tho' he had no more religion than this comes to; and he will love you alſo with the ſame kind of love.

2. THE next thing obſervable in my text, is the "manner" in which this young man inquired of our Savior, with reference to eternal life. And tis ſufficiently evident, that it was with a becoming decency. He appears to have been a well-bred youth, one who knew how to behave, and was diſpoſed to behave, towards thoſe with whom he had occaſion to converſe, with reſpectful agreableneſs. We are told in the text, that, upon coming to our Lord for inſtruction in the affairs of another life, he ſaluted him in that ſtile, "good maſter"! He calls him "maſter"; owning his authority as a teacher, putting himſelf in the place of a learner, and tacitly ſuggeſting his readineſs to receive inſtruction. He gives him the title of "good"; ſignifying the honorable opinion he had of him, as well as hope of being kindly anſwered, as concerning the ſerious and important queſtion he had propoſed to him.

NOR was his language only respectful, but he treated our Savior with becoming decency in his behaviour; for, as the evangelist Mark observes, * "he kneeled to him", no doubt in veneration of him as an extraordinary teacher, one far superior to the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's seat. Of all the persons, who addressed to our Lord for religious instruction, we read of none, who carried it towards him with greater external decorum. And it is the more observable in this young man, because he was both rich and honorable. And riches and honor united in the same person, especially when young, before he is arrived to maturity in judgment, and to have had experience of the world, is apt to elate his mind, puffing him up with a vain conceit of himself, and rendering him unfit to receive instruction, or to treat those with a becoming reverence, who are able to give it him. But it was not thus with this young man. Notwithstanding the elevation of his circumstances in life, he appears to have been a modest youth, of a sweet, agreable, endearing deportment. To be sure, his behaviour towards Christ was decent and respectful.

YOUNG people should learn from, this example, a becoming, winning, respectful carriage, especially towards their superiors. This will beautifie your character, and render you amiable in the eyes of all, who have opportunity to behold the decency of your deportment: Whereas, if you are rude in your speech and behaviour, you will appear with an ill grace, and make but a disagreable figure.

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* Chap. 10. ver. 17.

I SHALL not think it a needleſs digreſſion here to recommand this reſpectful carriage, in young perſons towards their ſuperiors, in a few ſpecial inſtances. As thus,

CHILDREN ſhould behave with all dutiful reverence towards their parents Their ſpeech ſhould be grave, mannerly, engaging; and their carriage ſuch as may be expreſſive of ſuitable eſteem and honor. This is particularly required in the 5th commandment, which is, "thou ſhalt honor thy father, and thy mother". And what more agreable, than to behold an habitual veneration in children towards their parents, diſcovered upon all proper occaſions, both in their ſpeech and behaviour? There is ſcarce a more pleaſant ſight. It recommends ſuch children to the approbation of all, who have any notion, either of civil or religious decency, and propriety: Whereas. on the contrary, what more grating than to hear children beſpeaking their parents in terms of diſreſpect? Or to ſee them behaving towards them, in a rude and unſeemly manner?

IN like manner, thoſe young perſons, who, by the authority of their parents, or guardians, and by their own conſent, are fixed, in order to their future advantage, in the relation of ſervants to others, ſhould behave towards them with all decent reſpect both in word and deed. They ſhould not beſpeak their maſters, as tho' they were their equals; much leſs ſhould their carriage towards them be expreſſive of the want of due honor, and reverence. The apoſtle exhorts, * "Let as many ſervants as are under the yoke,

* 1 Tim. 6. 1.

account their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed". It tends to the reproach of religion, and occasions unworthy reflections on the name of God, and his doctrine, when servants, instead of expressing a just esteem and reverence of their masters, carry it indecently towards them, whether in language, or behavior. The prophet therefore observes, * "A servant honoreth his master". A good servant does so, one who has upon his mind a just sense of his duty: Nor otherwise will he deserve this character.

MOREOVER, young persons should carry it towards those who are in age, with all suitable deference. Their age gives them superiority, be their circumstances, on other accounts, as they will; and makes a respectful deportment towards them, decent and proper. That therefore was a law in Israel, † "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man". And tis peculiarly graceful, when children and young people treat their fathers in age, in a manner becoming their superiority in years. It discovers a modesty of temper, an ingenuity of disposition, which are highly recommending: Whereas, if the "child behaves himself proudly against the ancient"; if he carries it towards him with neglect, or despises him because he is old, either in language or behaviour, it argues a bad turn of mind, and is offensive in the sight both of God and man. But especially ought young people to be cautious of every thing, that does not favour of a just decorum towards those, whose "hoary heads are a crown of glory to them, being found in the way of righteousness".

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* Mal. 1. 6. † Levit. 19. 32.

In theſe, and ſuch like inſtances, ſhould young perſons endeavour to render themſelves agreable. They may, tis true, fall ſhort of the power of religion, tho they ſhould behave towards their ſuperiors in this graceful manner we have deſcribed; but tis a deſirable conduct notwithſtanding. It rendered the young man in my text lovely in the ſight of the bleſſed Jeſus. And tis in itſelf a lovely recommending circumſtance in the character of a young perſon, of whatever condition in life. It diſcovers a becoming ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, an agreable modeſty and obligingneſs of temper, which are highly ornamental, and appear ſo in the eyes of the whole civilized, not to ſay, chriſtian world.

There is yet another thing, as to the "manner", in which this young man inquired about eternal life, well worthy of notice; and that is, the engagedneſs of heart with which he did it. It was indeed the ſerious concern he had upon his mind about the affairs of another world, that bro't him to our Savior, and put him upon making the inquiry in my text. Some came to him to aſk him queſtions, not from any ſerious ſenſe they had of religion, not with a view to receive inſtruction; but that they might enſnare him in his diſcourſe. But this was not the temper of mind, with which this young man came to our Lord. He appears, from the general run of the ſtory, to have been a tho'tful ſerious young man; and he was probably, at this time, under an awaken'd concern about the great affair of eternal life. To be ſure, he appears like one, whoſe heart was full of the matter. Hence the evangeliſt Mark obſerves, * that "he came running"

* Chap. 10. v. 17.

ning" to our Lord. This denotes the engagedneſs of his heart. He was earneſt and eager to be reſolv'd in the important queſtion he had to make, relative to eternal life.

And he has herein ſet an example, worthy of the imitation of young perſons; yea, of all perſons whatſoever. What ſhould engage our concern, if not an affair that relates to "our everlaſting well-being, in that world we muſt go into, when we ſhall no longer live in this? O the ſtupidity of thoſe multitudes, who are ſo concerned about the preſent life, that they have none at all about the other! One would think it impoſſible, reaſonable creatures ſhould be guily of ſuch madneſs of folly! and yet, it is the very folly the generality of mankind run into. They run into it at their firſt ſetting out in the world, and too commonly continue in it as long as they live; as if their great and only buiſineſs was, to purſue the profits, and pleaſe themſelves with the amuſements and vanities of this evil and tranſitory world. The good Lord open our eyes to ſee our amazing folly, and awaken in us a ſerious and deep concern about the affairs of religion and another world! This is the firſt thing neceſſary. Concern about any thing is the ſpring of all endeavours, with reference to it. We muſt therefore be concerned about eternal life. And if this once comes to be our caſe, and our concern is deep and thorow, we ſhall be ſeriouſly inquiſitive, how we may obtain it; and our endeavours, conſequent hereupon, will be ſuch, as that we ſhall be in "a hopeful way" of being prepared in this world, for the enjoyment of eternal bleſſedneſs in the next.—But I muſt now proceed to the—

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3. THIRD thing obſervable in the text, and this is, "the inquiry itſelf", the young man propoſes to our Savior; contained in thoſe words, "what good thing ſhall I do, that I may have eternal life"?

HE here takes it for granted, that there is another life after the preſent is ended, and that it may be an eternally happy one. So that he had faith in this firſt, and eſſential article of all religion. And, probably, the foundation of it was, not the exerciſe of his reaſon upon meer natural principles, but upon the ſcriptures of the old-teſtament, which, being a Jew, he had in his hands, and looked upon as wrote by holy men inſpired by God. And it were to be wiſhed, that all who are favour'd with the writings of the new, as well as old teſtament, had the like faith. There are Saducees among chriſtians, ſo called, as there were among the Jews; that is, men of corrupt minds, who ſay there is "neither angel, nor ſpirit", nor future ſtate of exiſtence; hereby eraſing the foundation of all religion. For "he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him", as the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews expreſſes it. *

THE young man, in my text, was not in this corrupt way of thinking. For he ſuppoſes it a matter paſt all diſpute, that there was ſuch a thing as eternal life; and his inquiry accordingly is, not whether there was ſuch a life? But "what he ſhould do that he might have it"?

AND

* 11. Chap. 6th ver.

AND here it is apprehended by moſt interpreters, that he diſcovered his ignorance of the goſpel-method of ſalvation by grace thro' Chriſt. And tis highly probable, being a Jew, and educated in the principles generally received in that day, his mind was leaven'd with the notion of obtaining life upon the foot of law. He doubtleſs imagined, when he propoſed the queſtion, in my text, that doing was the ground or reaſon upon which he might hope for life. Some good thing he ſuppoſed muſt be done; and he deſires to be inſtructed, what this good thing was, that he might do it. And here lay his ultimate dependance. It was his doing this good thing he concluded would, in its own virtue, give him a right to eternal life: In which he was groſly miſtaken, and really "eſtabliſhed his own righteouſneſs", inſtead of honoring Chriſt as "the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth".

YOU will then poſſibly aſk, muſt the concerned ſinner ſit ſtill, and do nothing in order to eternal life? Or, if he does any thing, will he be chargeable with "ignorance of God's righteouſneſs", and "eſtabliſhing his own"?

I ANSWER, this will by no means follow from what has been ſaid, with reference to this young queriſt. Tis true indeed, and readily acknowledged to be ſo, that nothing ought to be done in the ſenſe, in which he underſtood doing, in the queſtion he put to our Savior. For he undoubtedly imagined, that doing was that, in the ſole virtue of which, upon the ſole account of which, he might obtain a right to eternal life: In which

view

view of doing, nothing can be done by us ; not indeed ought we ſo much as to attempt the doing of any thing ; yea, ſo far is doing, or any attempt towards it, in this ſenſe, either neceſſary, or fit, that it is, in reality of conſtruction, and by juſt conſequence, a ſubverſion of grace and faith ; for "if righteouſneſs comes by the law, faith is made void, and Chriſt is dead in vain" ; as the apoſtle Paul argues, * But ſtill, ſinners in concern about eternal life, ought by no means to ſit idle, as tho' they had nothing to do. For tho' they can do nothing, nor ought to do any thing, as the "conſideration" upon which they may hope for the obtainment of life ; yet, in ſubſerviency to Chriſt, and while their dependance is principally and ultimately on him, and not on the virtue or worthineſs of their own doings, they may do all within the verge of their power. They may "aſk, ſeek, knock" ; they may "watch, pray, labor, ſtrive, wreſtle, fight", and, in a word, "do with their might whatſoever their hands find to do", as the ſcripture expreſſions are. And they ought, tis their undoubted duty, thus to exert themſelves to the utmoſt : Nor will they, by ſo doing, be juſtly chargeable with "fruſtrating" either "the grace of God", or that "righteouſneſs of his which is by faith" : Nay, tis only in this way of doing, that they may reaſonably hope for the obtainment of that "eternal life, which is the gift of God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord".

But as this is a matter of very conſiderable importance, I ſhall not think it either unprofitable, or unſeaſonable, if I am at ſome pains to ſet it

* Gal. 2. 21.

it in a more full and distinct light. In order whereto let it be remembered,

THERE are three things, with reference to the great affair of eternal life, which are worthy of special note; namely, the rise or source of the divine plan, conformably to which it becomes obtainable; the moral ground or foundation, upon which it is obtained; and finally, the character of the persons who shall actually obtain it.

JUST conceptions of these things will, if I mistake not, lead us into just ideas of our own exertments. We shall herefrom clearly perceive, not only its being fit and reasonable, that we should be up and doing, but be instructed how to give what we do, its proper place, and due subordination, in the business of eternal life.

As to the first of these things, the source of the plan, conformably to which eternal life becomes obtainable,—it is the free favor of God, his undeserved love and good-will. The excitement hereto was not from without, but lay wholly in his own breast. It proceeded from the essential, everlasting, supremely perfect benevolence of his nature. No foreseen doings of our's, in any shape whatever, had the least influence to persuade hereto. "He first loved us". We were indeed "sinners" in the view of God, when he came into the gospel-scheme of bestowing life. Adorable grace therefore was that, and that only, which moved him hereto. It sprang from this source, antecedently to all other considerations whatever. Even the appointment of Christ, to

carry

carry the plan of life into execution, was poſterior to, and conſequent upon, this love of God, and one of the amazingly glorious effects of it. "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon, that we might have life thro' him".

Now, the conſequence naturally and obviouſly deducible from theſe premiſes is, that eternal life, in regard of its being an obtainable bleſſing, has no connection with, or the leaſt dependance on, any thing we can do: Nor is it either neceſſary, or fit, that we ſhould do any thing, or attempt to do any thing, as tho' we could hereby move the heart of God to a willingneſs that life might be obtainable. This would be to ſubſtitute works in the room of grace; taking that glory to ourſelves, which is due only to God: Whereas, that abſolutely free favor, and undeſerved love of God, to which it is owing that life is attainable, ſhould be the firſt and great object of our dependance; and what we do, ſhould be done in a becoming ſubſerviency hereto Grace, in this way, will be principally honored, and not our ſelves. And I may pertinently add, tis only this way of doing, that is adapted to give eaſe and quiet to the ſinner's conſcience He might well be filled with deſponding anxiety and fear, if his dependance was on his own worthleſs doings to move the heart of God towards him; but while he exerts himſelf, having his chief and ultimate dependance on that boundleſs grace of God, which, from everlaſting, gave riſe to the plan of redemption, he may reaſonably take heart, and be of good courage. For, "if, while an enemy", the love of God was ſuch, as to purpoſe and contrive a

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way, wherein he might "be reconciled; how much more, being thus far reconciled", may he hope to obtain life?

THE next thing, in regard of eternal life, worthy of particular remark is, the moral ground or reaſon of its beſtowment. And this is the meritorious life and death of our bleſſed Savior Jeſus Chriſt. The inſpired writings, eſpecially thoſe of the new-teſtament, every where lead us to think thus of the matter. I need not turn you to the texts. You are all, it may reaſonably be preſumed, too well acquainted with them to be ignorant, that that glorious perſon, the only begotten ſon of God, while in our world, a partaker of fleſh and blood, both did and ſuffered every thing that was neceſſary, in order to a righteouſneſs, on account of which God might, in conſiſtency with the honor of his perfections, and the authority of his law and government, make the grant of eternal life. Accordingly, this meritorious righteouſneſs of Chriſt is that, for the ſake of which, upon the account of which, this bleſſing is confer'd. And on whomſoever it is confer'd, this is the true ground or reaſon of its beſtowment.

TIS eaſie now to collect from this remark, that no doings of our's are to be look't upon, as the reaſon, or conſideration, upon which the gift of life is made. In this ſenſe, all works of righteouſneſs, done by us, are totally uſeleſs; yea, the doing of them would reflect diſhonor on Chriſt, as tho' his worthineſs was an inſufficient ground of dependance for life. The plain truth

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is, the perfect righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the one only meritorious cauſe of eternal life. For which reaſon, we are to do nothing, it is not fit we ſhould do any thing, we cannot indeed do any thing, in the virtue of which, upon the account of which, we may hope to obtain life. All doings of our's in this ſenſe, would be that "eſtabliſhment of our own righteouſneſs", in oppoſition to "the righteouſneſs of God by faith", which is ſo often caution'd againſt by the apoſtle Paul. They are therefore, in this view of them, with great care, and particularity excluded, in his epiſtles, from having any, the leaſt hand in the affair of ſalvation: And with the higheſt reaſon; for if life could be obtained in the virtue of any doings of our's, it would "come thro' the law, and not thro' the righteouſneſs of faith"; which would "make faith void", and the life and death of Chriſt of none effect".

The laſt thing to be taken notice of, with reſpect to eternal life, is the perſons upon whom it ſhall actually be beſtowed. And theſe are not ſinners in common. For tho' eternal life, of the rich ſuperabounding grace of God, is a bleſſing obtainable by all without exception; and tho' the true reaſon of its beſtowment, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, is meritoriouſly ſufficient for all: Yet, the actual beſtowment of it is limited to ſome only, and theſe, of a certain character. Unbelieving impenitent ſinners, ſo living, and ſo dying, inſtead of entering into life, ſhall ſuffer the "ſecond death": Nor will the grace of God, or the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, be any ſecurity to them herefrom. The perſons upon whom God

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will actually beſtow eternal life are thoſe, who ſo believe in his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, as to be poſſeſt of a diſpoſition to true holineſs, that will throw itſelf out into ſuitable correſponding acts, as occaſions are offered therefor in the providence of God. This is the "grand mark", by which they are deſcribed in the revelations of ſcripture. And upon whomſoever it is found, whether they are Jews, or Gentiles; whether they be bond, or free; whether they are male or female; they are, in the goſpel eſtimation, ſubjectively meet for the beſtowment of life; and life ſhall actually be beſtowed upon them, of the rich grace of God, upon account of the meritorious righteouſneſs of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. And theſe are the only perſons, upon whom he will beſtow it. As for all others, be they who they will, or their character what it will, their doom will be, to be "caſt into outer darkneſs, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth".

THIS remark now will clearly and diſtinctly point out to us the ſuitableneſs of our own exertions, with reference to eternal life; and, at the ſame time, aſcertain their proper uſe, and place, in this momentous affair.

WE have ſeen, that eternal life will be beſtowed upon none but perſons of "ſuch a character", that is, upon none but thoſe, who are ſubjectively meet for it. What therefore we have to do, lies wholly in endeavours relating to this character, and this meetneſs. God, of his free favor, has abſolutely made eternal life an obtainable bleſſing. Here then we have nothing to do. All doings

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of our's would be impertinent. Chriſt, by his meritorious righteouſneſs, has furniſhed a compleatly perfect reaſon for the beſtowment of it. Here alſo it would be highly abſurd to ſuppoſe, we had any thing to do. This would be to place our own doings in the room of the perfect righteouſneſs of Chriſt ; which is, conſtructively, a ſubverſion of the goſpel. All therefore that we have to do muſt relate to that character, which the conſtitution of the goſpel makes neceſſary in order to the actual poſſeſſion and enjoyment of that eternal life, which the free favor of God has made obtainable, and which he may honorably beſtow in conſideration of his ſon's meritorious righteouſneſs.

And in this view of doing, there is both room for it, and an high degree of fitneſs in it, while we properly ſubordinate what we do to Chriſt and grace. For it is to be remembered, tho' God is the principal agent in the application of redemption, or, what means the ſame thing, in forming the character, without which he will never beſtow eternal life ; yet, in the doing of this, he conſiders us as intelligent and moral agents, as beings endowed with the ſeveral powers of thinking, reaſoning,willing,chooſing,refuſing,deſiring, hoping,loving,fearing,hating,& the like ; and accordingly deals with us as ſuch, by co-operating with theſe powers,in uſe of proper means,ſuitably adjuſted to their nature. He don't make men believers, without the uſe of their own faculties ; neither does he form them to this character, by giving them new faculties, or by deſtroying, or making any phyſical change, in their old ones ; but ac-

compliſhes his pleaſure in them, by accommodating his agency to their proper make and conſtitution. The bible always repreſents the matter in this light. And this method of acting exhibits the true reaſon of the erection of God's viſible kingdom, under the adminiſtration of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, with all its means, privileges, motives and bleſſings. Of what ſignificancy would it be to place ſinners under the goſpel-diſpenſation, if they had nothing to do but to ſit ſtill ? In this view of the matter, of what uſe would the inſtitutions of religion be to them ? Of what ſervice, the inſtructions, calls, intreaties, counſels, warnings and encouragements of God's word ? To what purpoſe would it be to apply to them to enlighten their minds, to influence their wills, to alarm their conſciences, to awaken their paſſions and affections ? There would be no propriety, I might rather ſay, there would be a downright impropriety and abſurdity, in this method of dealing with them, if they had nothing to do but to wait till God, without any exertion of their's, ſhould make them meet for eternal life.

Tis he indeed that forms men to this meetneſs ; but he does it mediately, and in a way ſuited to their nature as reaſonable and moral beings. Tis therefore obſervable, faith, converſion, the new man in Chriſt, which conſtitute the character of thoſe who are "meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light", are not only ſpoken of, in the inſpired writings, as "the work of God", but a work that he begins, maintains, carries on, and compleats, with the "concurring agency of men themſelves", in the uſe of various means

means wiſely adapted to the purpoſe. Here therefore there is both room, and opportunity for the exertment of our reaſonable powers; and if we neglect to make the proper uſe of them, we can reflect the blame no where but on ourſelves, if we are never made the ſubjects of that faith which is to ſalvation.

THE plain truth is, God, man, and means, are all concerned in the formation of that character, without which we cannot inherit eternal life. They ought not therefore to be ſet in oppoſition to each other; but ſhould be conſidered as jointly agreeing, and concurring, in this great affair. And the ſeparating theſe, or the oppoſing them to one another, or the ſetting aſide any one of them in order to exalt the other, is a diſſervice to religion, and dangerous to the ſouls of men. The order of the divine plan, and harmony of its parts, are hereby broke in upon, and thoſe things disjoin'd, and viewed as counter-acting each other, which the wiſdom of God has join'd together, and duely ſubordinated to each other.

IF, on the one hand, it would be extremely unreaſonable, and highly derogatory from the honor of God's grace, becauſe, in many texts of ſcripture, we are called upon "to believe, repent, and be converted", to argue from hence, there is no need of the powerful operations of the divine Spirit to introduce that moral change which is ſignified by theſe expreſſions: So would it, on the other hand, be extravagant and abſurd, becauſe faith and converſion are aſcribed to the influences of God's grace, to conclude herefrom,

that there is no propriety in the uſe of means; no need of preaching, or hearing, or praying; no need of inſtructions and motives, nor of the exerciſe of our own powers in attending to them; nor of any exertments of our's, that this work may be accompliſhed in us. Tis true, means, in themſelves ſimply conſidered, will do nothing to any ſaving purpoſe; but ſtill, God, by the powerful influences of his Spirit, can render them effectual; and with this dependance only ſhould we uſe them. Tis true alſo, we are, in our preſent fallen ſtate, poor, weak, corrupt and ſinful creatures; but however weak and corrupt we are, we yet retain the character of intelligent moral agents; and the grace of God does not ſuperſede our activity, neither does it deſtroy our faculties as men, but ſuppoſes the exertment of them; and by their exertment, duely ſubordinated to the influences of the divine Spirit, and concurring with them, that work of grace is wro't in us, whereby we are made meet for eternal life.

The ſhort of the matter is, the ſcripture every where conſiders us as men, as moral and intelligent agents, and repreſents God as beginning and carrying on the work of faith and converſion in a way analagous to our make as ſuch, by making uſe of means, and requiring our attention to them, and the exertment of even all our powers in ſubordination to him, and the all-powerful influences of his grace and Spirit. A great part of the bible would be unintelligible upon any other ſcheme of tho't. If it did not lie with us to make uſe of our ſeveral faculties, whether intellectual or moral, why has God taken ſuch care,

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in all ſuitable ways, to apply to them to excite their exerciſe? Why has he offered ſo much light to inform our underſtandings? Why, ſo many motives to perſuade our wills? Why, ſo many awakening conſiderations to alarm our conſciences? Why ſo many curſes and bleſſings to rouſe our fears, and animate our hopes? Surely, it is reaſonable and fit we ſhould exert theſe powers of our nature, or ſuch reaſons to engage their exertment would never have been preſented to us. Shall God ſet before our view his law, in all its ſtrictneſs and terror, on purpoſe that it might be a "ſchool-maſter" to teach us our abounding ſinfulneſs and guilt, and ſhew us the abſolute need we ſtand in of the Savior he has provided for us; and we, at the ſame time, take no care, make uſe of no endeavours to learn, from this inſtructor, the undone ſtate we are in as ſinners, that we may be in a proper diſpoſition to look out for help in the mercy of God thro' Jeſus Chriſt? Shall God reveal to us the hope of the goſpel, the all-ſufficiency of Chriſt as a redeemer, the fulneſs of merit and grace there is in him, his ability and readineſs to ſave even the chief of ſinners, and we remain unmoved under theſe amazing diſcoveries of his love and pity, and ſet down eaſie without doing any thing at all that we may partake of the benefits of redeeming grace? Shall God apply to every faculty he has endow'd us with, every principle of action in our nature; omiting nothing we can mention, nothing we can conceive of, that is adapted to work upon reaſonable creatures, and we continue notwithſtanding indolent and inactive? Tis infinitely abſurd to ſuppoſe it fit it ſhould be ſo. And, in truth, we are ſo conſtituted, that it can't be ſo; tis impoſſible

ble we ſhould ſit ſtill, and do nothing, unleſs we are ſtupidly ignorant, or as ſtupidly inſenſible.

Some, I know, under the pretence of being jealous for the honor of Chriſt and grace, have repreſented all exertments of our's as hurtful, rather than uſeful ; and inſtead of urging ſinners to " ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate", rather tell them their own endeavours are uſeleſs, and it better becomes them to wait inactive till God ſhall pleaſe powerfully to work the work of faith in them. But this is to run from one extreme to another, and to guard againſt one danger, by geting into another as truly fatal. We cannot be too much concern'd, that Chriſt and grace may have their due glory in the affair of our ſalvation ; but under the notion of exalting Chriſt, and magnifying grace, we muſt not reflect diſhonor on the wiſdom of God, who has ſo contrived the plan of life, as to make our exertments neceſſary, tho' in the proper placeof ſubordination. If there is danger, leſt, if men are put upon doing, they ſhould truſt to their doings to the diſhonor of Chriſt ; is there not danger likewiſe, if they are inſtructed to ſit idle and do nothing, leſt they ſhould miſs of grace, die without an intereſt in Chriſt, and periſh in another world ? The proper method here is, not to ſuppoſe that men muſt be inactive, but to ſhew them how their activity may be ſo ſubordinated to the grace of God,& the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as that they may harmoniſe with each other in the great affair of eternal life ; which is what I have endeavoured to do in the preceding diſcourſe.

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And now, as the concluſion of what we have heard, let us endeavour to entertain in our minds juſt conceptions of the ſcheme ofGod, with reference to eternal life. Let us adore and magnifie that unmerited love, and free favor of his, which have made it obtainable by the ſinful ſons of men. Let us admire his wiſdom in contriving ſo wonderful an expedient,for the beſtowment of it in a way honorary to his perfections and government, as the meritorious righteouſneſs of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. And let our hope for life be primarily and ultimately grounded on grace and Chriſt, and not on any doings of our's, leſt we become chargeable with "eſtabliſhing our own righteouſneſs", and not ſubmiting to that which God has contrived and appointed : Yet, let us beware of ſitting idle, and doing nothing, as if all doing of our's was needleſs ; for it has its place ; and, in its place,it is highly proper. Neither the grace of God, nor the merits of Chriſt, take away the neceſſity, or the ſuitableneſs, of our own exertions in the buſineſs of attaining to life ; and tis ſo far from honoring the grace of God, or the merits of the redeemer, to ſuppoſe ſuch a thing, that it really caſts reproach upon them both. Tis to ſeperate between thoſe things, which God has joined together. Men may, tis true, place their own doings in the room of Chriſt, or divine grace ; and ſo they may, under the notion of exalting Chriſt, and magnifying grace, reject all exertions of their's as uſeleſs, and to no purpoſe : But, in either of theſe caſes,diſhonor is done to the redeemer, & that grace of God which can never be inconſiſtent with our own endeavours, duly ſubordinated. While therefore we

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giveGod the glory of his grace,in making life attainable ; and Chriſt, the glory of his worthineſs, in depending on that for the beſtowment of it, let us labor and ſtrive, that we may be made meet for this great & abſolutely neceſſary bleſſing ; as firmly believing, we can have no good reaſon to expect to be made thus meet for it, if we ſit ſtill and do nothing : Whereas, if we exert ourſelves with zeal and vigor, in the uſe of appointed means, we may encourage ourſelves to hope, that God, for Chriſt's ſake, will begin, maintain, and carry on that work of grace in our ſouls, which will finally end in that life of glory, in the heavenly world, which ſhall be eternal. GOD grant this may be the happy portion of us all for his mercy's ſake, in Jeſus Chriſt our Lord !

John Chaffee

A M E N.

☞ The reader is deſired to correct the following Errata, and any other he may obſerve that have eſcaped the Author's notice.

PAg.40. title pag. read anſwered.p.41.l.31.for purity,r. ſincerity.p.77.laſt l.aft.chief dele , p.93.l.24.aft. ſubjects r.of.p.99.l.18.f.they were,r.it was.p.107.at bot f.Gen r.Heb.p.108.at mark† r.Heb.11.p.118.l.8.r.remembered. p.128.l.9.f.had,r.has.p.138.l.1.f.has,r.have.p. 175. Note l.9.f.words,r.ſounds.p.176.Note l.4. dele ſame.p.211.laſt l.f.his,r.ſin.p.250.l.18. r.things. p.259.l.20. f.believers, r. unbelievers.p.267.Note l. 8.dele greater. p. 288. l.17. aft. groſs,r.a.p.315.l.27.r.dayly.p.325.l.2.r.recommend.

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